

Strategy, Culture and Institutional Logics: A Multi-layered View of Community Investment at a Large Housing Association

By

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ABSTRACT

This project is an ESRC CASE study of one of the largest housing associations in England. The aim of the study was to take a multi-layered view of the organisation to explore its changing identity, by tracking its evolving community investment strategy over a 2 year period as an examination of shifting sub-cultures and driving institutional logics. The underlying theme of a multi-layered approach led to a research design sub-dividing the organisation horizontally and vertically into management strata and functional and geographical sampling points. The focus on 'strategy, culture, logics and community investment' was derived from a research cycle which integrated both macro level issues and the organization's internal agenda reflecting the inherent paradoxes characterising the hybrid third sector of social housing. The thesis builds on earlier work on competing institutional logics in social housing and links this to changing organisations cultures to show how hybridity is enacted over time. The author concludes that a dominant corporate sub-culture, tied into a commercial, customer-driven logic has been displacing more regional, local community cultures derived from the pre-merger organisations. This enactment process is exemplified by the centralisation and consumerisation of CI services depicted in the author's logics-culture matrix.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Safwan, who was still finding his little feet at the start of this study in 2007, and is now all grown up in his school cap and blazer and tie, to Zubair, for making it possible, and to my family for their unceasing support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This PhD study was part of a 3 year collaborative research arrangement between the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) at the University of Birmingham, and HAX, a large and dynamic housing association in England.

I am grateful to all the participants in this study, for their participation in the research study, their time and their assistance in providing further resources and data to help uncover what HAX was all about. In particular, thanks go to the CEO at HAX, for the unique opportunity afforded of conducting an in-depth case study research project at one of the largest housing associations in the UK, and to the senior executives who performed the role of 'in-house' supervisors and co-ordinators. These individuals were supportive and accommodating, from the very start of the study through to its completion.

I would like to acknowledge all the authors cited in this thesis and in particular colleagues and academics whose current work on the hybrid third sector of social housing and the changing identity of housing associations has helped inform the research enquiry for this study.

This thesis would not have been possible without the generous guidance, encouragement and constructive critique from the PhD supervisors, David Mullins, Bruce Walker and Ricky Joseph, based at CURS at the University of Birmingham. Their invaluable guidance and friendship has made the experience of postgraduate research both a stimulating and truly rewarding one.

Finally warm thanks are extended to my spouse, Zubair, my siblings, Muhammed Asad, Naseeba, and Hassana, my parents, Omar and Soraya, and to other close family and friends for helping in immeasurable ways - from babysitting to proofreading to moral support and encouragement over the course of the research and the writing up of this thesis.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and Rationale

English housing associations (HAs) provide a well-established example of hybrid organisations, operating with a mixture of logics derived from their roots and links to communities, the state and the market (Billis, 2010, Mullins and Pawson, 2010). As the largest providers of affordable rented housing, they provide around two and half million affordable rented homes for five million people from financially disadvantaged or socially vulnerable backgrounds (NHF, 2010).

This study contributes to the literature seeking to explore the evolving organisational strategies, cultures and identity of third sector housing, HAs in the UK and in Europe (Brandsen et al 2006, Heino et al 2006, Gruis 2008, Czischke, Gruis and Mullins 2008, Czischke 2009). The contested influences of state, market and society on the strategic direction and cultural evolution of HAs, as depicted by Gruis (2009), are evident in the key political and economic developments at the time this study was conducted.

The Cave Review on the future of social housing regulation (Cave Review, 2007) contributed to policy debate around the Housing and Regeneration Bill of 2007/8. Before the Act was passed on the 22 July 2008, different interests were contested between key groups in the sector including HAs, trade bodies,

existing regulators and private funders. Responding to a call for evidence, over 120 submissions to the Cave Review (DCLG, 2007) from key groups in the sector captured these expressed interests while the ensuing debate exposed the competing visions of the nature of social housing and the significance of third sector identities and organisational cultures.

The credit crunch in 2008, rooted in sub-prime mortgage markets, and the subsequent recession highlighted debate on the future of housing markets, housing finance and housing provision in the UK. The recession exposed a vulnerable side to banks and private financial institutions, while revealing the increasing onus of public subsidy faced by the government in a number of sectors, notably the substantial social housing sector.

Beyond the timescale of this research, the pressure to do more with less looks to become more intensified in the future with the dramatic reduction in capital subsidies for social housing outlined in the Coalition government's Comprehensive Spending Review, which sees a reduction from the previous Labour government's new affordable housing programme budget of £8.4 billion over three years to £4.5 billion over four years (DCLG, 2010). With the combination of banks tightening purse-strings and the government expecting its pennies to go even further, particularly with regard to a wider social return, and with new challenges to community linkages from the Big Society (Cabinet Office, 2010) and localism agendas (DCLG, 2010), how HAs adapt to meet divergent demands remains relevant as a research topic.

As a qualitative longitudinal research case study, delving into the inner workings, organisational culture and multiple realities of one of the prominent large English HAs, this piece of research will make a unique contribution to existing knowledge in the field of social housing and the study of social housing organisations.

From a theoretical perspective, this research develops existing theory relating to competing institutional logics (Scott, 2002; Thornton, 1999; Friedman and Alford, 1999; Mullins, 2006; Lounsbury, 2007) by making links with theory relating to strategic management (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985) and organisational culture (Hofstede, 1991; Gregory, 1993; Schein, 1985) to explore the changing strategic management and organisational culture of a large HA. In this way, this research will link together organisational and institutional theory in an empirically rich case study.

1.2. Research Remit and Underlying Questions

This project began in September 2007, in the form of an ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) Case Studentship at the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) at the University of Birmingham. The project formed part of a collaborative research arrangement between that department, and one of the largest HAs in England, which owns and manages a stock of over 50 000 homes located in over 100 local authorities across the country. For the

purposes of this thesis, the case study organisation will be named as HAX (Housing Association X).

The broad research remit for this project was to explore: *'The Changing Management, Governance and Accountability of Large, Not-for Profit Housing Associations.'*

For the researcher, inherent to this topic were specific questions about new strategic directions, governance structures and accountability mechanisms, but also broader, underlying questions about change, such as:

- How are housing associations changing?
- Why are housing associations changing in the way they are?
- What are the key issues or forces affecting housing associations and how do these forces interplay or contest?
- What do these changes say about the evolving identity of housing associations?

Broadly, the key issue addressed through this case study was about the changing identity of HAs. More specifically, this study would seek to understand how these changing organisations were influenced by different state, market and society drivers in constructing their strategic objectives, defining their role and function, and fulfilling their critical role in housing, and supporting, disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.

Unpacking the given topic was a crucial exercise in the process of developing and taking ownership of the research subject matter, as the researcher was

encouraged to do over the course of the study. It was a particularly important process as in a funded research project with a predetermined case subject and a broadly predefined topic, there was a danger of become wholly engaged with the detail of research, without fully considering the more philosophical questions associated with the research topic . The successful application to a research funding body in a sense involuntarily validated, or inherently reflected the importance of the research subject matter. The rationale behind the research might therefore have been taken for granted over the course of the research, and the focus turning instead to understanding only the ‘what’ and ‘how’ rather than questioning the ‘why’, which is the fundamental starting point of any research enquiry.

In this case it was the researcher not being familiar with the context of social housing in the UK, which turned out to mitigate these risks relating to a predetermined research enquiry. An early overview of both academic and industry literature, (including a detailed analysis of the evidence submitted to the Cave Review¹) as an initial means of engaging with the subject matter, revealed inherent paradoxes and a complexity that characterised the hybrid third sector of social housing in the UK, poised - not always delicately- between the state and the market.

It became of utmost importance to the researcher to reflect (and *reflect* being the critical word) the complexities of this world in the type of underlying questions the research project would address. Instinctively, the research

¹ See Chapter 3 for the analysis of Cave Review Evidence (DCLG, 2007)

developed in a reflexive, iterative way with methodological, empirical and theoretical issues integrating and informing each other at various stages of the project, so that the title of the thesis evolved as critical issues emerged and were refined. This research cycle, which will be described below, became the means by which the researcher could take ownership of the topic and develop the research aims and objectives of the study.

Despite the evolutionary nature of the research cycle, there were two constant drivers that were inherent to the process. The first was an obvious one, even if it had not been suggested in the initial brief for the project, and that was the unique opportunity the PhD presented for an extended period of primary research given the three year research partnership between CURS and HAX. This privileged open access to a leading organisation in the sector would need to be best leveraged, not only as an acknowledgement of the collaborative arrangement, but also as a key aspect of the research contribution to existing knowledge in the field. This will be a recurring rationale for some of the decisions made regarding the scope and methodology for this project.

The second factor relates to the complexity and tensions inherent to the sector referred to above. It became clear through early scoping fieldwork at HAX, that the organisation represented a microcosm of the paradoxes that had emerged in the sector analysis.² These were paradoxes related to the hybrid identity of HAs characterised and embodied in the divergent demands of state, market and society (Gruis, 2009), and while constant, were by no means static. In the same

² This sector analysis constitutes the basis for discussion in Chapter 2.

way as the political and economic change drivers in the social housing sector shifted and altered over the course of the project, the organisation HAX too was in a perpetual state of flux. Like the HA sector which had not reached a consensus on its identity, with varying degrees of allegiance to philanthropic roots, public sector legacy and market institutions, so too the organisation HAX seemed to embody different meanings for different actors or stakeholders, as it grappled with its identity as a 'business for social purpose'.³ The second essential theme of the research process then, which also critically informed the methodology, was the idea of a 'multi-layered view', of the organisation which the researcher sought to capture in exploring the key issues that were identified in the original topic.

The underlying question that motivated the research was therefore about change and capturing tensions or paradoxes:

How and why are housing associations changing, what competing forces influence these changes and what was the best way to understand these changes and tensions in the case study of a large housing association?

In the original research remit, the questions refer to a plurality of 'housing associations' while the final topic refers to 'a large housing association'. This clarification occurred after a consideration of some of the methodological parameters of case study research, including the generalisability of specific case study findings (Bell, 2005; Flick, 2006; Yin, 2003). This discussion can be found in the Chapter 4 of this thesis, which considers opportunities for

³ A phrase used in the industry and at HAX to describe a social entrepreneurial identity

theoretical generalisability as a means by which to achieve external validity for case study research.

Needless to say, this case study project was conceived as a contribution to literature in the area of social housing and third sector research in the UK. The following section explains how the developed focus on strategic management, organisational culture and community investment was derived from a research cycle which integrated both macro level issues and emerging concerns from the organisation. Where these factors collided or coincided, the focus areas for the research were uncovered.

1.3. The Research Cycle

At the same time as undertaking a sector analysis to engage with critical emerging themes, the next logical step may have been to locate the topic within its relevant theoretical frameworks - in other words, finding some existing literature on which to shed new academic light.

The interesting but rather broad remit of exploring the '*The changing management, governance and accountability of large not-for profit housing associations*' provided the opportunity to undertake the case study research from a wide array of theoretical possibilities, which would have to be systematically distilled. The broad array of theoretical genres that were potentially appropriate included Corporate Governance; Strategic Management; Organisational Change Management; Third Sector Organisational Studies and

New Public Management. At such an early stage of the process where the researcher had only begun to develop a relationship with the case study organisation, a shallow familiarity with the organisation HAX and a still-growing understanding of the industry it operated in did not seem sufficient to explore only a few particular areas of theory and by default eliminate other potentially relevant schools of knowledge that could be pertinent to the project.

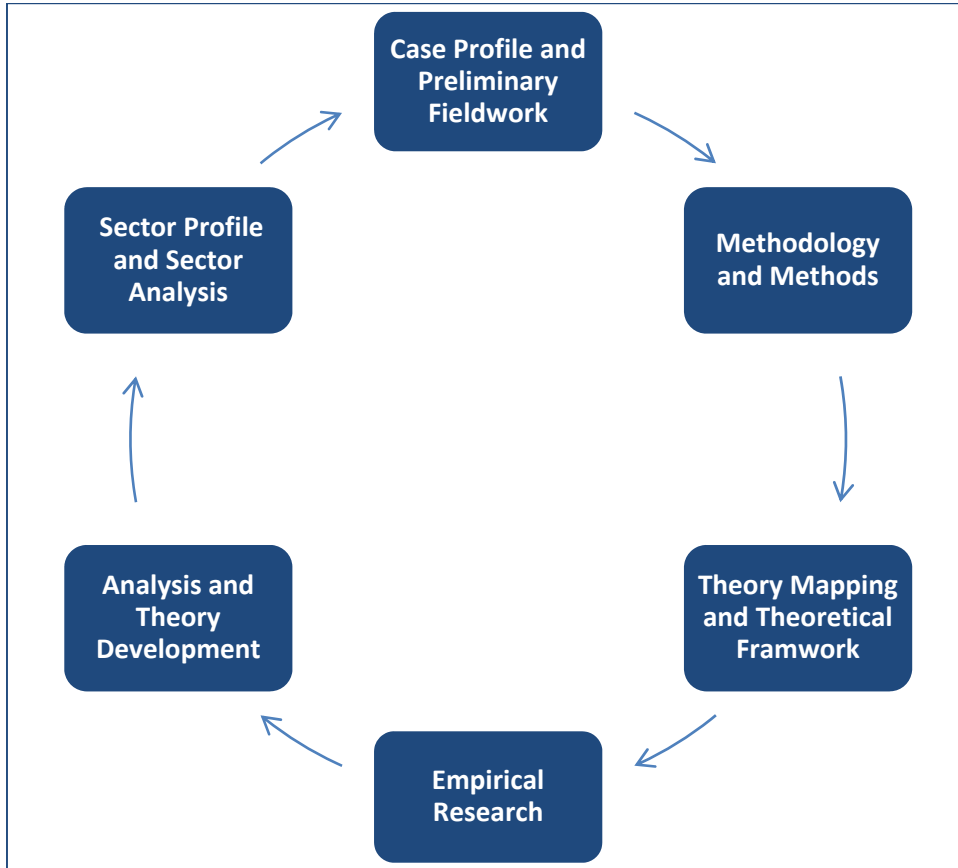
This dilemma informed the researcher's decision to find an alternative process by which to refine the research questions and personalise the research topic, which would in turn enable more focused literature reviews of theoretical frameworks to locate the research enquiry. Originally conceived as a 'research jigsaw' with different component pieces building up a research picture, the metaphor developed into that of a research cycle (see Figure 1-1 below) due to the cyclical, iterative nature of the process of distilling the research questions, refining a methodological approach and constructing a theoretical framework, where each stage of the research cycle was revisited and informed by the previous stages.

The in-depth analysis of the context and sector was used to discover trends in the sector; change drivers and organisational responses where parallels could be drawn to the case study. Concurrently and subsequently to this analysis, preliminary scoping fieldwork was also undertaken, shadowing another research programme at the same organisation, identifying gatekeepers and building relationships and a rapport with participants. This inductive process

highlighted the key issues concerning the case study housing association, and areas of interest that could be further explored in the PhD research.

While trying to remain open to possibilities and let the research questions develop organically, maintaining trust, real-life logistics and expectations from research participants at the housing association meant some indication was required as to the practical outline and terms of engagement of the research, such as research methods and identifying participants or interviewees. Although it may have been a more typical PhD route, it would have been difficult to justify a year or more of theoretical ruminating before fully engaging with the empirical work of the case study. At this stage, without the theoretical foundations fully laid, it became useful for the researcher to consider the research methodology and clarify an ontological stance and epistemological perspective. This constituted the next phase of the research cycle.

Figure 1-1: The Research Cycle



Source: The Author (2008)

A combination of an instinctive interpretive position as a researcher, the questions arrived at from the sector analysis and preliminary fieldwork stages, and a sense of what would be useful as both an academic contribution and a practical output for the organisation, informed the decision to undertake 14 months of predominantly qualitative fieldwork at the case study organisation, from October 2008 to December 2009 (following a year of preliminary scoping fieldwork from October 2007 to October 2008.) An abductive (part deductive, part inductive) approach to the empirical fieldwork was therefore adopted, with some preconceived and identified questions at the inception of the project at the same time as employing the ongoing preliminary empirical findings to further

develop these research questions. Methodologically speaking, this approach conforms to some principles of grounded theory, which allows the data to emerge in an inductive way (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), but at the same time incorporating deductive processes and generating theory from the primary information sourced.

As the emerging data from the scoping fieldwork was considered, the theoretical focus and detailed research objectives for the project were mapped and finalised. The various stages of the research cycle had led to a focus on three key areas: Strategic Management, Organisational Culture and Sub-Cultures, and Community Investment⁴, the combination of which tied in with the key emerging sector and organisational issues, while at the same time referenced the original study remit. Since the empirical research constituted the bulk and critical aspect of the entire study, and as part of the abductive methodology and integrated cycle, the researcher considered options for synthesising theory and methodology, that is exploring strategy, culture and community investment in a multi-layered way, but also to tie in with current research in the social housing field.

Building on existing literature on institutional logics (Thornton, 2002, 2004), Mullins (2006a) had investigated the underlying tension between the logics of scale and efficiency on the one hand and local accountability on the other, using case studies to map the impact of these competing logics on organisational change in HAs. There were commonalities between this doctoral research

⁴ This term is commonly used in the sector to refer to Neighbourhood services and other non-core housing management activities. See NHF Audit (2008). For a detailed background, see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.

project and that academic paper (Mullins, 2006) in terms of subject matter, that is the exploration of organisational change drivers in HAs. Furthermore the potential to develop the theoretical ideas further through linking institutional logics with organisational sub-cultures, as uncovered through the multi-layered study of the case study HAX, made institutional logics a relevant choice for theory development. It helped to complete the theoretical framework for this project, by providing links between organisational cultures and sub-cultures and organisational strategies (for example to understand the changing organisational sub-cultures at HAX as reflected by a new strategic direction in community investment)⁵. Because of the inductive approach to the primary research, this theoretical discourse was elaborated through the empirical findings of the study, as indicated on the research cycle (Figure 1-1).

Building on the early stage fieldwork, these findings were drawn from the main bulk of empirical fieldwork conducted over a 14 month period, from October 2008 to December 2009. An interpretive, reflexive position was adopted for this predominantly qualitative research project. A multi-layered or mini-case study format was developed to provide the methodology appropriate to exploring the sub-cultures of the organisation, by sub-dividing the organisation into management strata and functional and geographical sampling points as units of analysis. To achieve data triangulation, a multi-method methodology was utilized including semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation, observation and documentary analysis. A grounded theory approach was employed to analyse the qualitative data (Glaser and

⁵ Chapter 4 includes the detailed development of this theoretical framework.

Strauss, 1968) through a process of categorisation, reflection and conceptualisation (Saunders et al. 2003) in a systematic thematic reduction of empirical findings. This was a primarily inductive method observing and distilling themes and patterns in the data, but it ultimately incorporated deductive processes as theory emerging from the empirical findings was related to relevant theoretical frameworks identified earlier in the research cycle.

Finally, to complete the research cycle (see Figure 1-1), or indeed to re-initiate the process, the analysis of the case study findings and the development of theory became the academic contribution of this PhD, and a means by which to then contribute to a broader debate on changes in the context of the sector.

1.4. Research Aims and Objectives

Having considered the broad ‘why’ questions behind this project, this section outlines the ‘what’ and ‘how’, that is the aims and objectives of the study, but still related to the multi-layered rationale behind the research enquiry.

Through the reasoning and approach described in the previous section, the title for this project evolved into:

‘Strategy, Culture and Institutional Logics:

A multi-layered view of Community Investment at a large housing association’

The aim of the study was to explore the changing strategic management and culture at a large housing association by exploring the development of its

Community Investment strategy over a two year period⁶, as a reflection of multi-layered views and sub-cultures within the organisation combined with competing institutional logics.

Tables 1-1 to 1-4 below provide an overview of the multi-layered rationale behind the selection of key themes identified in the early stages of the research process. Without wanting to pre-empt the discussion in the following chapters, an overview of the motivation behind the focus of this research enquiry is useful for the purposes of clarifying the aims and objectives for this project, and demonstrating in particular how the issues are linked to the research cycle described in section 1.3.

Table 1-1 highlights issues around strategic management, organisational culture and community investment that emerged from the sector analysis phase of the research cycle. These were broad, macro-level themes that emerged from the critical analysis of change drivers and organisational responses in the HA sector.

⁶ Taking together the preliminary scoping period and primary fieldwork period. The third year of the PhD was assigned for data analysis and writing up the thesis.

Table 1-1: Key Themes and a Multi-Layered Rationale: Sector Analysis

Sector Analysis	Strategic Management	Culture	Community Investment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rationalisation of the sector • Large commercial mega – organisations at the top of the sector. • Tension between efficiency goals and economies of scale and local service delivery and accountability. • Lack of consensus regarding the core function of HAs • Diversification into private markets. • Responsibility for social/ community services formerly undertaken in the public sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift from traditional organisational structures towards social entrepreneurship. • Mega HAs with expanding scale of operations • Increasing importance of private lenders as stakeholders results in a growing corporate culture. • Emphasis on business models, strategic planning and increased financial reporting. • Debate on HA identity and role within the housing sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philanthropic or local authority legacy of some HAs • Civic duty and accountability to tenants, communities and society • Regulatory debate: divergence of views on what constitutes non-core activities • Resentment towards 'policy passporting' by the regulator • National Housing Federation's 2008 campaign in defence of 3rd sector identity and independence.

Source: The Author (2010)

Methodology	Strategic Management	Culture	Community Investment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part deductive-original project remit of changing strategic management of large HAs Part inductive-Observing trends in the sector and new strategic directions at HAX 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpretive research position to explain multiple realities and layers at HAX Three year collaborative case study: opportunity to conduct an in-depth qualitative study to explore intangible and hidden cultures Researcher's access to all management levels and range of stakeholders at HAX: appropriate to explore subcultures at different levels of the organisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case study method feasible for in-depth investigation into the strategic planning and management of community investment activities. Snapshots of specific community projects possible as part of a multi-layered view of the case study.

Table 1-2: Key Themes and a Multi-Layered Rationale: Methodology

Source: The Author (2010)

Table 1-2 illustrates the links between methodological approaches to this study and the same key recurring ones. A critical aspect of this link was the multi-layered views the study aimed to capture through a multiple sampling-point strategy across a cross section at HAX⁷, and the different organisational sub-cultures which would be uncovered as a consequence. Table 1-3 reveals how significant developments at HAX, identified in scoping fieldwork undertaken at the organisation, were related to the same core themes of strategic management, organisational culture and community investment.

⁷See Chapter 4, Section 4.4.

Table 1-3: Key Themes and a Multi-Layered Rationale: Scoping Fieldwork

HAX - Scoping Fieldwork	Strategic Management	Culture	Community Investment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dynamic, post-merger context • Evident strategy-making process: corporate planning and strategic objectives • Impact of sector factors such as a regulatory and economic conditions on the strategic direction of the organisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong corporate outlook driven by a business-oriented leadership • Distinct cultural variations across management hierarchy and geography at HAX • Perception across that post-merger cultural fit had not been achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variance across HAX on what constitutes CI • Community support services often regarded as discretionary • Acknowledgement of imbalance between strong financial purpose and providing the 'softer stuff' like CI • Proposals for a new centralised CI department

Source: The Author (2010)

Finally in Table 1-4, some theoretical reference points are highlighted in relation to the same key themes.

Following on from the multi-layered rationale behind Strategy, Culture, Institutional Logics and Community Investment as the main themes for the case study, the general aim of this study was expanded to generate some practical research objectives in order to explore these major themes. These objectives were to explore the emergent strategy and key developments in the strategic management of CI at HAX over 2 years as part of overall changes at the organisation, at the same time as identifying the changing sub-cultures across different layers of HAX.

Table 1-4: Key Themes and a Multi-Layered Rationale: Theoretical Reference Points

Theoretical Reference Points	Strategic Management	Culture	Community Investment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic management theory Established literature relating to strategic positioning (Porter, 1985) and the strategic process (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). Mainly conceived in a profit-making context, but partly applicable to the not-for-profit sector Opportunities for theoretical generalisation in the cross-pollination of theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational cultural theory as a well developed thread of organisational theory Links between culture, strategy, leadership, and organisational structures clearly established (Miles and Snow, 1978; Handy, 1993; Johnson, 1992; Schein, 1997) Established concept of organisational sub-cultures or groups exhibiting a common identity and value system (Gregory, 1983; Hofstede, 1981) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not an academic or theoretical genre per se. Relevant literature on CSR and social entrepreneurship Institutional logics theory (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Scott, 2001) could be used to comment on dominant sub-cultures, to link new strategic directions in CI with culture Strategic management theory to frame understanding of CI strategy at HAX.

Source: The Author (2010)

These sub-cultures would be uncovered by exploring the multiple identities and co-existent realities of the same organisation from the perspective of a range of participants at HAX. By following key strategic developments at HAX and revealing participants' views of the core purpose and identity of the organisation (and in particular why and how CI was or should be done) this study would link

each layer of the organisation to a driving institutional logic related to the dominant sub-culture.

1.5. A Multi-Layered Approach

In summary, this research is distinguished by the way in which the study is framed and the findings structured through the customised research cycle that both informed and was informed by the research process in its totality, as well as the integration of the methodological and theoretical frameworks in a multi-layered approach.

Indeed, this study has sought to assimilate a multi-layered approach on a number of different levels:

- A multi-layered research process through overlapping stages of a research cycle.
- A multi-layered rationale behind the topic and main themes of the research.
- Exploring the multiple layers or sub-cultures within the organisation.
- Multiple mini-case studies within a single case study to uncover the different views, perceptions and co-existent realities.
- Tying together methodology and theory by layering organisational sub-cultures with external and institutional factors.
- Layering perspectives by varying the 'zoom lens' at different stages of the research and thesis:

- Macro-level frame: Community Investment as a microcosm of larger sector debates to do with identity (public/ private/ hybrid), function (core services/ additional service) and accountability (tenants/ community/ society).
- Micro-level case study focus: A detailed qualitative study of the organisation HAX to uncover strategy, reveal multi-layered views, and link sub- culture and logics.
- Macro-level outcomes: Relating key findings and 'logics outcomes' to exiting theoretical debate as well as considering sector changes and implications for the future direction of (large) HAs.

1.6. Thesis Structure

This layering of perspectives - from broad to specific to broad - is reflected in the structure of this thesis and the content of its chapters. Chapter 2 provides a background profile of the English housing association sector as well as a critical analysis of change drivers and organisational responses in the sector, focusing on the key themes of this study. In Chapter 3 the theoretical framework for this case study is developed which links the concepts of strategic management, organisational culture and institutional logics as the academic foundation for the empirical investigation. The ontological positioning reflected in this study, the methodological approaches adopted and a detailed research design, are the subject of Chapter 4. Chapters 5 to 9 constitute the original empirical contribution of this case study, starting with an organisational profile and

reflections on preliminary scoping fieldwork (Chapter 5); moving onto a multi-layered exposition of research findings (Chapters 6 to 8); and finally a critical analysis of these findings and consequent theoretical implications (Chapter 9). The concluding Chapter 10 summarises the key findings from this case study project, its underlying theoretical arguments as well as the broader implications of these findings. It discusses too the unique qualities and contribution of this project as well as its limitations and shortcomings.

Taken as a whole, the thesis is an interpretive, in-depth, qualitative case study of a large, dynamic housing association, located at a critical phase in the evolution of third sector housing in England.

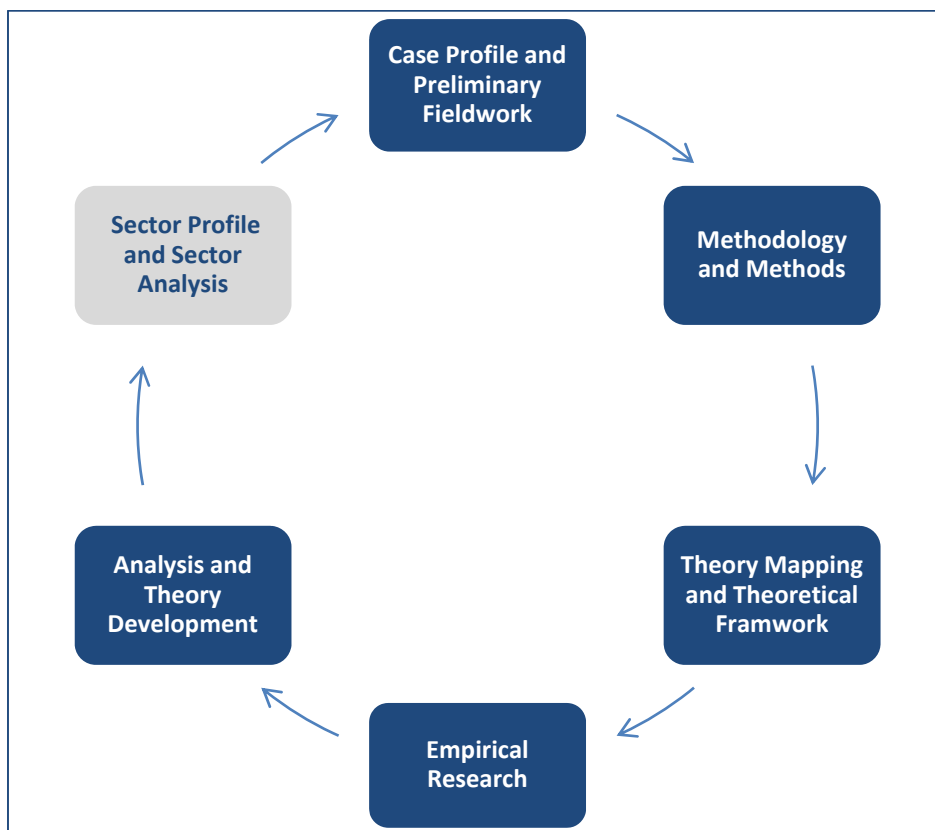
CHAPTER 2:

SECTOR ANALYSIS

2.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to locate this study in its broader context by providing a background to the housing association (HA) sector and to present key arguments from the sector analysis that were critical in constructing the core research questions for this research. Figure 2-1 below locates this crucial stage in the research cycle for this study.

Figure 2-1: Research Cycle: Sector Analysis



Source: The Author (2008)

As described in the previous chapter, this sector analysis was undertaken as an initial means of engaging with the research subject matter. While scoping fieldwork was being conducted at HAX (from October 2007 to September 2008), a detailed analysis was undertaken of the organisation's context, looking specifically at political and economic change drivers and organisational responses in the sector. This analysis provided a background to the social housing sector in England but also revealed the tensions and contradictions, which, mirrored with key developments at HAX, was used to tease out the key research aims for this case study project.

The first part of this chapter provides a background profile of the sector historically and up to its current policy context. The chapter goes on to critically analyse industry conditions up until the end of the main fieldwork phase in December 2009. Key macro-level changes impacting on the industry are considered through multiple stakeholder views on policy and regulation prior to the Housing and Regeneration Act being passed in July 2008 (Cave Review Evidence, DCLG, 2007), as well as an original examination of the dramatic economic conditions of the credit crunch in September 2008 and the consequent recessionary impacts on the sector (Sacranie, 2008; Sacranie, 2009).

Section 2.2. of this chapter provides a background to the HA sector. Section 2.3 considers key trends in the sector as well as change drivers and organisational responses. In particular the growth of the sector and the repositioning of HAs adopting business models of management is highlighted while more detail is

provided on Community Investment (CI) as an area of particular relevance for this case study. Section 2.4. contains a discussion on the scope of regulation and the identity of the social housing sector by outlining the parameters of the Cave Review (Cave, 2007) and examining the varied responses submitted as evidence to the Review (DCLG, 2007). The analysis moves on in Section 2.5. to assess the impacts on the affordable housing sector of the credit crunch and recession in 2008/2009 (Sacranie, 2009). Finally in Section 2.6. the changing identity and hybrid nature of housing associations are further explored before the concluding section summarises the main themes of the sector analysis in relation to new strategic directions, changing organisational culture and the role of community investment.

The non-profit housing sector in England and in the EU has evolved significantly both historically and recently. A vast quantity of published literature, academic and industry or policy related, is available on the topic of housing associations, particular on websites of housing bodies such as the industry trade body, the National Housing Federation (NHF) and former and current regulatory institutions, and CECODHAS the umbrella body at European level. This literature has been drawn on to construct this profile and to explore the motivation and trends behind the changes and developments in the HA sector.

2.2. Background

2.2.1. The Housing Association Sector

In a well cited definition Cope (1999) characterises HAs as independent, non-profit distributing organisations governed by voluntary boards to provide mainly rented housing at below market rents. Although aspects of this definition have altered over the years, an essential characteristic of HAs has been their inclusion in the third sector by successive government legislation and definitions.

Today HAs still function in the not-for-profit sector within a dynamic housing market in the UK and Europe. While the size and nature of HAs vary they have an underlying aim of providing affordable homes for the financially disadvantaged and for other vulnerable groups. This is achieved predominantly through affordable rented housing but also through a variety of tenures such as shared ownership, market renting and direct sales.

HAs have been described as a *'Dynamic, expansionist and highly professional set of social businesses'* (Malpass 2000, p.270). Altogether they provide about two million homes for five million people across England. Most of these homes are rented at affordable rates, while a significant minority are sold through low-cost home ownership schemes (NHF, 2007).

The origins of the sector are debated from HAs originating from medieval almshouses to relatively more recent roots in Victorian philanthropic housing companies in the late 1800s and early 1900s (Malpass 2000, Mullins 2010).

Early HAs had different models of finance, structure and regulation to their counterparts today. Organisational forms ranged from endowed charities with voluntary trustees to limited companies with investors and shareholders, to Industrial and Provident Societies (Malpass, 2000). By the early 1970s, a significantly expanded sector included an array of different organisational models from philanthropic trusts to co-ownership societies to church-based HAs addressing homelessness in communities.

Two pieces of legislation that strongly influenced the character of the sector as is today were the Housing Acts of 1974 and 1988 respectively. The introduction of the Housing Association Grant in the 1974 Housing Act increased levels of funding available for housing development, while accessing the grant meant registering with the Housing Corporation (HC) as a non-profit housing organisation. This emphasised the departure of these organisations from independent voluntary status and philanthropic roots and paved the way for new organisational forms with an increased financial capacity. The Housing Act 1998 transformed the sector by allowing for large scale private funding to further increase financial capacity, which consequently led to a considerable expansion of the HA sector (Mullins, 2010; Mullins and Murie, 2006; Malpass, 2000). This private finance was also leveraged to make possible the large scale transfer of council housing stock to HAs and the improvement of that stock. Since then the expansion of the HA sector has been largely accelerated by this large scale voluntary transfer (LSVT) of local authority stock. Indeed between the years of 1998 to 2008 around 1.3million homes have been transferred to the HA sector

in this way (Lupton and Leach, 2011). In this way the mixed economy of welfare was driven through social housing while the private funders became a key interest group and exposure to financial risk from the private sector became a new dimension in the sector.

In England the sector has been characterised by continued growth over the last 30 years with an increased pace of stock transfer, and in particular poorer housing stock in urban areas (Malpass and Mullins, 2002, Mullins, D., Niner, P. and Riseborough, M.. 1992). The rise of HAs in the last quarter of a century can be seen in the context of the declining strength of local government (Mullins and Murie, 2006; Malpass, 2000). Rather than being a grand plan, the gradual displacement of council housing by HAs has been an incremental process of change with different drivers in different periods (Mullins, 2006) such as the impacts of housing policy described above.

Today social housing in England *“represents one of the largest single capital investments by the state.....billions of pounds have been invested by government to provide affordable homes, through capital subsidy and housing benefit. As a consequence, the largest housing associations now resemble big businesses in terms of scale and turnover, owning and managing around 8% of the nation’s housing stock.”* (Blond in Lupton and leach, 201, p 5)

HAs complete an annual regulatory statistical return (RSR) which together with published annual accounts of HAs provide reliable data for *The Global Accounts of Housing Associations* (Housing Corporation 2005 - 2008, TSA, 2008-2011)

which aggregates these financial accounts of HAs to gain a sense of the sector's overall strength. In 2005 The Global Accounts of Social Landlords showed HAs to be holding Total Assets of £40 billion, with a turnover of £8.3 billion and pre-tax surplus of £444 million (Housing Corporation, 2006, p 3). There were 1840 active HAs registered with the then regulatory body Housing Corporation (HC), and over 1200 belonging to the national trade body the National Housing Federation (NHF, 2007). The sector was also characterised by the control of more than a third of housing stock and the majority of financial capacity by fewer than 20 large HAs (L and Q, 2005).

Moving on to the most recent figures on the sector, according to the 2010 Global Account of Social Landlords (published in March 2011), there are around 1500 active housing providers owning or managing nearly 2.5 million homes, with the continuing trend for a small number of larger organisations owning and managing most of the housing stock (TSA, 2011). Indeed in March 2010, 63 social housing providers either owned or managed more than 10,000 homes, which is around 48% of total social housing (TSA, 2011, p. 7). In a significant increase in the past 5 years, the sector's assets presently exceed £100 billion, while social housing organisations have been supported by £43 billion of private finance and £38 billion of public grants (TSA, 2011).

This data provides a good sense of the scale of the English HA sector as well its financial capacity and asset base, while also highlighting the trend of a relatively small group of HAs controlling a large proportion of social housing

stock. The following section moves on to consider organisational models in the sector.

2.2.2. Organisational Models

Because of the diversity of sector there is no single organisational model for HAs but usually several functional departments under a Governing board of management and sub-committees, while a Chief Executive Officer and various directors usually have strategic and operational control (Cope, 1999). Large HAs, with a stock of greater than 50 000 homes, have the most complex staffing hierarchies (Mullins and Riseborough, 2000). The constitution of an association determines ownership or shareholding membership of organisation and the composition of its board. Rules are formulated by National Housing Federation and incorporate the statement of shareholders duties, roles of board, chair and CEO (NHF, 2007).

HAs have become involved in a variety of inter-organisational arrangements and organisational models as a result of a government policy drives such as Investment Partnering and a desire to increase efficiency and scale of activity, spread overheads, mitigate risks, access specialist skills, increase influence and access better funding (Mullins and Craig, 2005). Structures range in a continuum from single independent organisation, partnerships, contracts, alliances, groups, amalgamations, voluntary and enforced transfer of engagements.

The growth in mergers of HAs could be regarded as both a change driver and organisational response, in that mergers could be seen as driving efficiency in a newly formed organisation, while a quest for achieving efficiency and scales of economy could be considered as a driver of merger activity in the sector.

At the start of this study group structures were the dominant organisational model in the sector (Mullins and Murie 2006, p.210), usually involving a parent housing association and a number of operating companies and subsidiaries, such as in the case of HAX. The perceived advantages of a group structure include being able to retain organisational identity, preserving value brands, managing tax efficiently and accommodating cultural differences.

Looser arrangements with devolved group structures were also deemed to have disadvantages as they were expensive to maintain and cumbersome to operate. However at the time of this study there was evidence that HAs had started to address this by collapsing their group structures to become more efficient (Davies et al, 2006). This rationalization of operational structures was a key strategic development at HAX around which the themes of organizational culture and community investment (CI) were explored.

At the same time shortcomings of mergers in HAs included the danger of one organizational culture dominating, the length of time for integration to occur, and risk of loss of local accountability (Davies et al, 2006). These issues are pertinent in the case of HAX as the following chapters will reveal.

Large HA organisational models did not always reap the benefits they were supposed to. The Future Shape of the Sector Commission (L and Q, 2005) suggested that the creation of group structures, with mergers as the catalyst had led to a 'labyrinth' in governance structures and that 'Bigger is not automatically better or cheaper'. In an appropriately entitled report 'Is big really best?' Lupton and Davies (2005) found no evidence that organizational size; better quality services and lower costs are linked (Davies et al, 2006).

At the time of this study, a key trend in the sector was the continued growth of the largest HAs through mergers and alliances (L and Q, 2005) Although the credit crunch and recession in 2008/2009 slowed down merger activity, recent policy developments in the form of the Comprehensive Spending Review (HM Treasury, 2010) could see merger activity resume with increased competition for smaller capital grants.

The following section considers this and other key trends in the sector and maps change drivers and organisational responses at the time of this study.

2.3. Key Trends, Change Drivers and Organisational Responses

2.3.1. Business Culture: Repositioning HAs

The ENHR Comparative Study of HAs in EU countries (Czieschke and Gruis, 2007) provides a useful insight into change drivers and sector trends in a broader European social housing context. Evidence from the study suggested

that housing was becoming more market orientated and competitive, parallel to the decline in the provision of public social housing and the transformation of welfare states in large parts of Europe. Social housing in the EU, including the UK, faced the challenge of providing decent housing in the context of reduced capital funding, which was driving change towards more market-oriented or business approaches with self financing models (Czischke and Gruis, 2007). A general trend that the UK did not conform to at the time was the decentralisation of housing policy, although this could change as the new Conservative-led coalition government in the UK develops its policies according to a more localist agenda in the form of the Localism Bill (DCLG, 2010).

Czischke and Gruis(2007) also describe the increasing application of business principles and broadening of services by social housing organisations in Europe. Two types of business principles emerge in their comparative study: performance management (with regard to efficiency, accountability and financial performance) and market orientation (broadening the scope of activity). The former ties in to the idea of efficiency drives in the sector, while the latter refers to the increasing diversification of these housing companies.

In the English context, the introduction of private finance in the late 1980s has steadily increased the importance of private funders as stakeholders. The increased level of mixed funding has made banks and lending institutions powerful stakeholders influencing the direction and strategies of HAs by increasing the emphasis on strategic and long term business planning and financial reporting (Mullins and Riseborough, 2000; Mullins and Murie, 2006).

According to Malpass (2000, p. 218) *'The impact of private finance and risks associated with it have changed the culture of even long-established associations, making them more businesslike in outlook.'*

In the shift from traditional voluntary housing status to social businesses, housing organizations have become managerialised through a performance and business culture and are overall more commercially driven (Mullins and Riseborough, 2000; Walker, 2000). This is reflected too in the changing governance of HAs. Because of its charitable status, voluntary governance had been a long-standing feature of the HA sector in the UK. However after much debate in 2003, Members of the Board were allowed to receive payment for their services to the HAs. There has also been a shift from the strategic influence of board members to a more significant influence of executives in developing and implementing organisational strategies (Mullins and Murie 2006, p.197).

As part of the rebranding of the not-profit sector, there had been a move away from voluntary labels to descriptions of HAs as social businesses, which has reflected too the increased level of investment activity in the sector and the strategic re-positioning of HAs, with large scale providers and smaller more niche operators both operating in the sector (Malpass, 2000; Mullins and Murie, 2006)

At the same time as HAs were becoming more business-like, moving from public to market-based characteristics, in the EU and in England there were calls for an increase in the accountability of HAs (Czischke, 2007; Mullins and

Riseborough, 2000) which has led to a tension of competing change drivers and rival demands faced by HAs (Czischke 2007; Mullins, 2006). These divergent demands will be considered in more detail later in this chapter after the issue of accountability is further uncovered and a background to CI has been provided in the following sections.

2.3.2. Accountability, partnerships and diversification

HAs are responsible towards regulatory bodies⁸ and, since the financial deregulation described above, private funders too (Cope, 1999). Another perceived dimension of the responsibilities of HAs is their public accountability, which is about the raised expectations of HAs in relation to tenant participation as well as their accountability to local communities, including dealings with local service providers in health, social welfare, police and employment agencies. This has resulted in models of community partnerships being encouraged by a number of government and industry led initiatives such as Local Strategic Partnerships and the National Housing Federation's 'iN Business for Neighbourhoods' respectively (NHF, 2007).

Since the 1990's there had been an increased public focus on housing associations as sole providers of new social housing which led to a demand for more transparency and accountability, as well as greater public expectation of more choice and consultation over decisions that affect them (Cope, 1999;

⁸ Section 2.4 in this chapter will focus on regulation, changing regulatory frameworks and their implications for HA sector identity

Mullins, 2006). Accountability also therefore broadly includes the actions of HAs in supporting residents to influence decisions made in neighbourhoods, as well as influencing other organisations working at neighbourhood level to focus on wider community priorities (Bacon et al, 2007). These actions can be pursued through a variety of channels, from housing resident members of boards to more consumerist models of engagement, such as the use of surveys and focus groups and suggestion schemes, now popular with larger HAs. Indeed, consumerist approaches appear to be replacing formal representation of residents in governance as the main mechanisms for accountability (Mullins, 2006) and this ties in with earlier arguments in the previous section of the adoption of business models in the HA sector. The growing predominance of a consumerist approach is an important theme of this case study and will be explored in further detail in the empirical sections of this thesis.

Although the core business of HAs of managing affordable rental and developing new affordable housing is inherently a socially valuable one, emphasis has been placed on the added value HAs provide through their community investment and neighbourhood roles (Mullins, 2010, NHF, 2007, Wadhams, 2006). Part of this emphasis is related to the retreating welfare state and the increasing expectation for HAs to fulfil wider community obligations in line with the public policy agenda. Czischke and Gruis (2007) contend that the one of the key challenges facing social housing organisations in a number of EU countries is the retreat of the state in social services provision at the same time as and the growing role of urban regeneration and neighbourhood management in social housing.

Apart from retreating welfare states, another argument behind the remit for HAs to provide CI activities occurs is that they are so well placed to do so (Mullins, 2006; Wadhams, 2006; Bacon et al, 2007). Wadhams (2006) examines the potential for HAs to become more entrenched in, and a focal point for community based initiatives. His study considers evidence from 300 HAs to investigate partnership structures that exist between HAs and other stakeholder groups and voluntary organisations. The nationwide presence of HAs can be seen as an ideal opportunity for neighbourhood renewal and can provide access to funding and support for voluntary and community organisations (Wadhams, 2006). This view is reiterated by Mullins (2006b) who proposes that the accumulated asset base of associations and their significant presence in the deprived neighbourhoods targeted by government regeneration and social inclusion programmes supports their involvement in neighbourhood programmes.

Because of HAs providing an increased portfolio of services to the wider community in neighbourhoods, they are seen as having diversified from their core role as social housing landlords. This diversification can be regarded as both a change driver in that it requires new flexible organisational structures, but also as a consequence of change drivers in the sector. Brandsen et al (2006) examine the diversification of HAs across Europe through the increasing occurrence of non-landlord activities, and find that HAs are developing into delivery agents of various social services such as employment training or regeneration. In English context, there has also been a diversification of

activities beyond social housing into a wide range of community services and schemes (Housing Corporation 2005, NHF 2008). This diversification has reflected the Labour government's public policy agenda, where housing has become part of broader regeneration and social agenda (Mullins and Riseborough, 2000) as evident in one of the strategic aims of the NHF which is *'to lead the housing and neighbourhoods policy agenda nationally and locally'* (NHF, 2009). There has therefore been a drive in the sector encouraging HAs to become key players in communities, not just as developers and landlords but through their social investment role. Indeed part of this rationale behind the focus on CI as a key theme for this study was that it reflected the tensions between social, economic and political or public policy priorities in the social housing sector.

The following section provides further detail on the scale of scope of HAs' neighbourhood and social services beyond their housing management and development role.

2.3.3. Community Investment (CI)

The term 'Community Investment', also sometimes referred to as 'Housing Plus', is commonly used in the social housing sector to refer to neighbourhood services and other non-core housing management activities (NHF, 2008a). In addition to their primary role as social housing landlords and developers, HAs also leverage their local presence to deliver a wide range of additional services

at a neighbourhood-wide or community level, rather than offering services to just their residents. Examples of these community services include nurseries, children's play areas, community centres, community radio, healthy eating initiatives, business start-up schemes, environmental improvement projects, apprenticeships and training schemes, debt advice services, healthy eating advice and food co-ops, to name a few.

According to Mullins (2011, p 4),

“The history of the housing association sector highlights the long-standing links between housing and wider community investment. Rather than a diversification from ‘core business’ these activities have long been central to the missions of many associations. There are examples of youth diversionary and financial inclusion activities in the 1930s. Generations of associations have been founded on responses to housing and wider community needs.... What all of these cohorts had in common was to see housing as part of a more holistic set of responses to social needs.”

To some extent therefore, the engagement of HAs in CI activities reflects the historic values and purpose of these types of associations. Furthermore, since HAs have historically chosen to become involved in unregulated community services, the provisions in the Housing and Regeneration Bill in 2007/8 to regulate the community investment activities of associations (DCLG, 2007a)⁹ were regarded as a threat to the sector independence (NHF, 2007). On the

⁹ Section 2.4. expands on this debate around the proposed regulation on non-core CI activities.

other hand the NHF's 'In Business for Neighbourhoods' campaign has been regarded as a reminder or re-statement of that independence (NHF, 2007). Increasingly, and particularly in the case of large HAs, CI had become more strategic in its focus with more commercial themes designed to benefit both communities and the company's core business, for example working towards corporate objectives, increasing profile and positive PR outcomes, and increasingly with outputs that can be measured (Mullins and Sacranie, 2008).

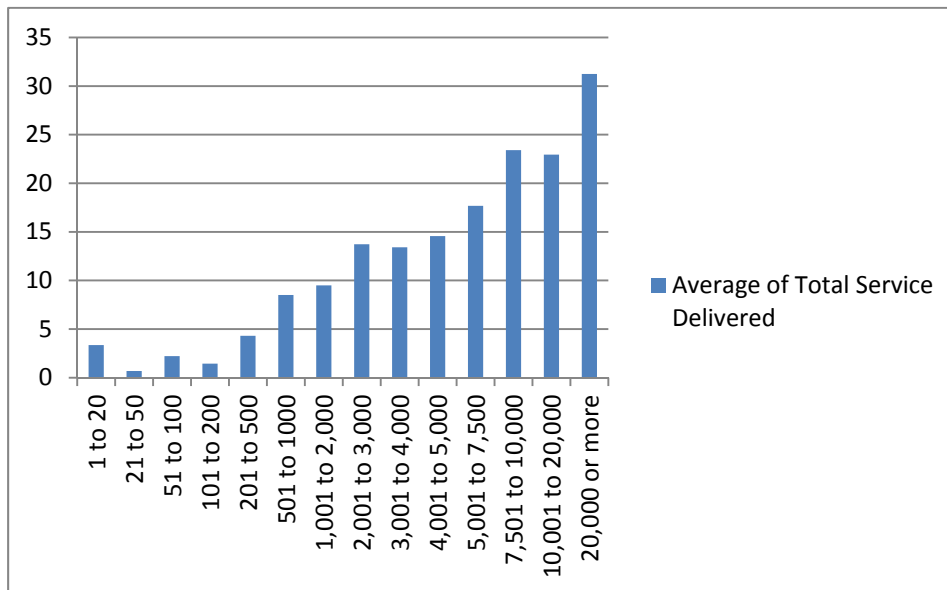
In 2006/7 the NHF conducted the first national audit of the scale and scope of neighbourhood services and facilities in the social housing sector. Prior to this there was a lack of comprehensive data on CI activity in the sector. According to the NHF audit, HAs directly employed 4560, provided 6,800 neighbourhood services and either provided or managed hundreds of neighbourhood facilities, which benefited around 5.5 million people (NHF, 2008a). Over the period of the audit the total CI spend was around £435 million, of which £272 was provided by the HAs themselves and an additional £163 million was externally sourced. Table 2-1 provides some detail on the breakdown of these services into the key areas of neighbourhood facilities, safety and cohesion, environmental services, education and skills and employment and enterprise (NHF, 2008a). Figures 2-2 and 2-3 look at the overall picture of the type and funding of activities according to size bands of HAs.

Table 2-1: Community Investment in the HA Sector

Type of Service						
	Employment and Enterprise	Education and skills	Well-being	Poverty and Social Exclusion	Safety and Cohesion	Environmental
No of services delivered	574	1238	656	984	1878	1472
No of people benefitting (approx)	67 600	246 600	406 000	368 000	1.7 million households	1.7 million households
No of staff directly employed	640	950	580	450	1250	690
Total investment in £million	45	66	41	44	90.5	78.5
HAs own investment in £million	26	46	23	30	55	62
External funding secured In £million	19	20	18	14	35.5	16.5

Source: The Author based on NHF National Audit of CI Activities (2008a)

Figure 2-2: Average Number of Total CI Services by Housing Association Size



Source: Mullins and Sacranie (2008, p. 35) based on NHF data (2008)

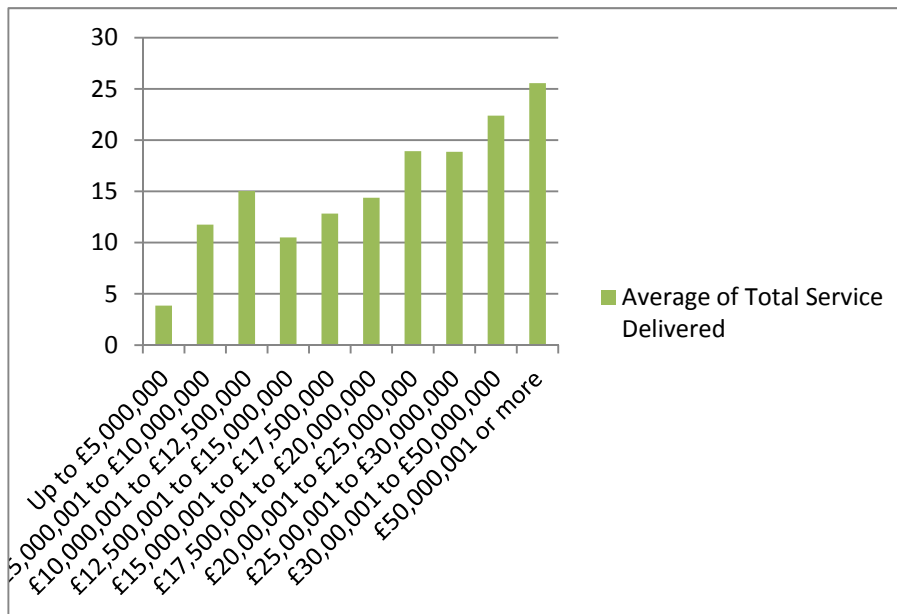
This audit took place around the same time as the intense debate around the formation of the new regulatory body questioned to what extent these community investment activities would be externally regulated by the government, as described above.

At the same time another development in the HA sector was the adoption of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies, particularly by the largest HAs such as HAX, to frame their CI activities (Mullins and Sacranie, 2008).

Generally CSR is seen to refer to the expectations for companies to contribute or be held responsible to a wider society rather than simply shareholders or investors in those companies. In other words,

“Corporate Social Responsibility is concerned with the ways in which an organisation exceeds the minimum obligations to stakeholders specified through regulation and corporate governance.” (Johnson and Scholes, 2003, p. 220)

Figure 2-3: Average number of CI Services Delivered by Turnover



Source: Mullins and Sacranie (2008, p. 37)

CSR is a predominantly market or private sector concept, particularly relating to large corporate and multi-national companies. The adoption of CSR in the social housing sector, which provides an inherently social role in meeting the housing needs of the socially and economically disadvantaged groups of society, is therefore an apparent paradox, and this paradox will be returned to in section 2.6. of this chapter.

The three main areas of CSR and their application to housing organisations are illustrated in Table 2-2 below.

Table 2-2: Aspects of CSR in Housing: Economic, Social and Environmental Sustainability

<p>Economic sustainability: impacts on local business and employment, work force participation, impacts on residents: financial inclusion and household costs</p>
<p>Social sustainability: social inclusion, cohesion, community investment, education</p>
<p>Environmental sustainability: Green construction, environmental performance of existing dwellings, renewable energy and waste management</p>

Source: Mullins and Sacranie (2008)

Mullins and Sacranie (2008, p14) outline four main mechanisms by which HAs can adopt CSR strategies. The first is through corporate governance and embedding CSR into corporate objectives of HAs themselves. The second is being accountable to the wider community through stakeholder and network relationships and partnership working. The third mechanism that can facilitate CSR in the HA sector is procurement activities and supply chain management, leveraging influence and channelling socially responsible investment from

private sector partners. Finally HAs can take advantage of their local presence and resources as social landlords to positively impact on neighbourhoods.

Despite its emergence in the cases of some large HAs, CSR remains a predominantly market or private sector concept, particularly relating to large corporate and multi-national companies. The adoption of CSR in the social housing sector, which provides an inherently social role in meeting the housing needs of the socially and economically disadvantaged groups of society, is therefore an apparent paradox. This paradox is characteristic of the blurred boundaries between what is private, public and third sector within the social housing world. The following section highlights these tensions by mapping change drivers and organisational responses in the HA sector at the time of this study, and drawing attention to the divergent demands placed on HAs. The paradox of CSR in social housing will be returned to in section 2.6. of this chapter.

2.3.4. Divergent demands: Mapping change drivers and organisational responses

This chapter has already introduced the range of influences or change drivers that have been shaping the identity of the social housing sector in England and have lead to the emergence of new organisational forms encompassing aspects of the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. The typology of drivers and

organisational responses, illustrated in Table 2-3, focuses on key themes that have emerged from this analysis.

According to this summary of sector changes, divergent demands on HAs were pushing or pulling them in different directions, leading to a blurring of boundaries between the private, public and not-for-profit social housing sectors. The steady move away from voluntary status to social businesses suggested an empathy towards the private sector. This was reflected by HAs that were becoming increasingly more market-orientated and self-financing as opposed to publicly funded. The growing importance of private lenders as stakeholders further encouraged the direction and strategies of social housing providers towards business plans, financial reporting and performance management. With this 'managerialisation' of social housing organisations (Walker, 2000), approaches to customer service and welfare work were becoming more consumerist, reinforcing a private sector ethos.

The other direction in which the not-for-profit housing market has been pulled was towards the delivery of services formerly provided directly by the public sector. This followed a trend of outsourcing of public services that was also occurring in other parts of the public realm such as in health and education. Housing had become part of a broad community and regeneration agenda with HAs asked to play a leading role in communities, supporting partnerships with local authorities (Local Strategic Partnerships) and other public service bodies such as the police or local schools (Wadhams, 2006).

At the time the functions of regulation and grant funding were co-located in the same body i.e. the Housing Corporation, which had led to ‘policy-passporting’ (Cave Review, Responses to the Call for Evidence, 2007) where the Corporation has been able to promote government agenda particularly in the case of promoting neighbourhood initiatives and regeneration schemes. In this way public sector policy was being implemented through the not-for-profit sector.

Table 2-3: Sector Changes and Organisational Responses of Housing Associations

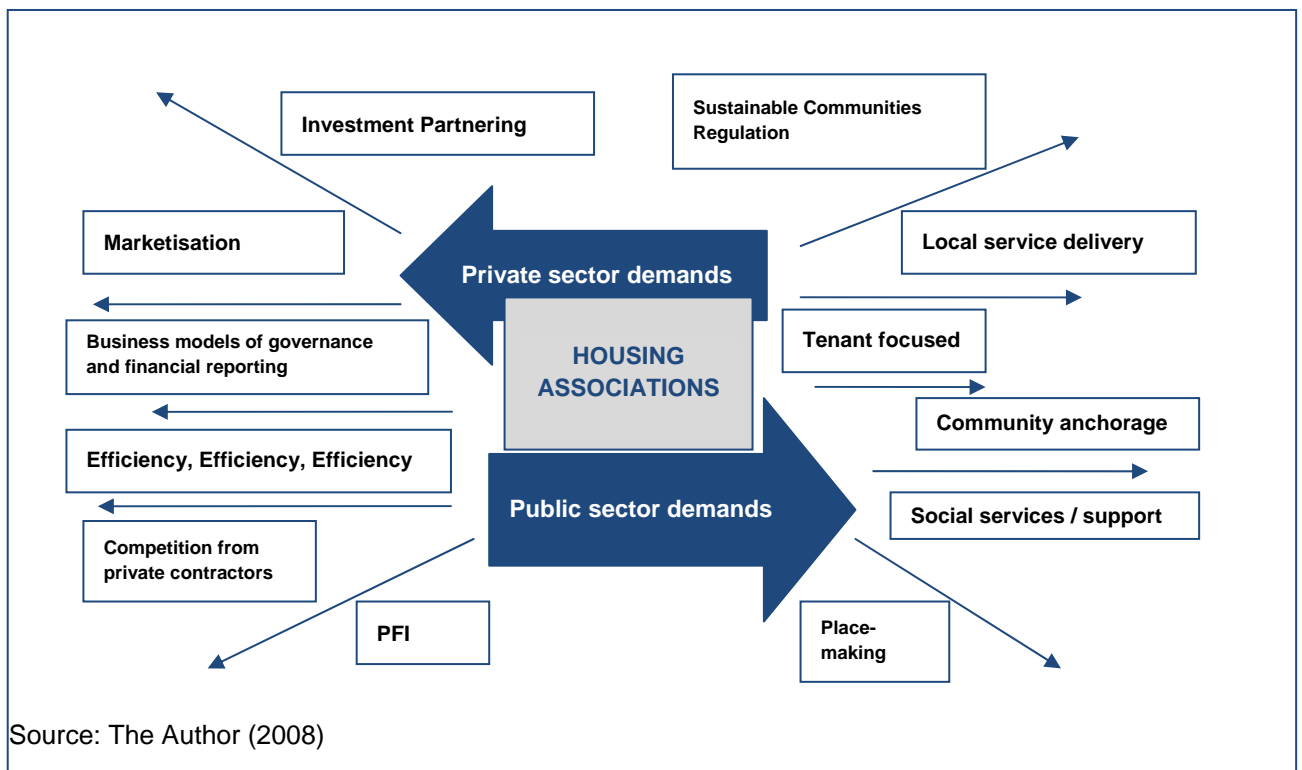
Change Drivers	Organisational Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial and Operational Efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in Governance and Management Streamlining; Business Models Competition to attract skilled staff and board members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scale Economies Pressures for Efficiency Regulatory Burden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mergers and Alliances to reduce overheads/ operating costs/ Procurement savings Growth and Expansion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth in Private Funding Accountability to Lenders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiency Drivers Private Sector Business Models Increased Financial Reporting Sticking to core product to reduce risk Diversification to increase income
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountability - Consumer (tenant) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consumerist approach to customer care, customer satisfaction (market research) Survival of more direct representation approaches - tenant representation on boards

Change Drivers	Organisational Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountability - Public (neighbourhoods) Public Policy Government Social Agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community investment and support services Regeneration and eco schemes Local Strategic partnerships Neighbourhood roots and links Corporate Social Responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased competition from private developers/contractors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sector wide call for 'level playing field' with private sector entrants (links to de-regulation agenda). Need to preserve third sector identity as USP differentiator

Source: Mullins and Sacranie (2008)

These competing demands, unique to this third sector of social housing, were manifest by a range of political and regulatory factors as well as economic drivers, as depicted in Figure 2-4.

Figure 2-4: Divergent Demands on Social Housing Organisations



Source: The Author (2008)

The following sections will develop the arguments summarised in table 2.2. on change drivers and responses by considering industry evidence on developments in the regulation of HAs at the time of this study as well as the impacts of the credit crunch and recession on the HA sector.

2.4. Regulation, Sector Identity and the Cave Review evidence (2007)

2.4.1. Regulation in the HA sector

Under successive governments, the social housing sector experienced a marked increase in regulation through the Housing Corporation and Audit Commission in what Power (1997) has called the 'Audit Society' (Power, 1997). Regulation was focused on the auditing of standards of processes and service delivery and promoting '*evidence-based practice*' (Power, 1997, p. 123). In the housing sector Mullins and Murie (2006) illustrated the apparent shift from sector specific to wider governmental regulation, which the authors contend symbolises the reduced regulatory capture and ability to set the agenda by large HAs.

Table 2-4 below summarises previous findings in the interest group or key stakeholder analysis of social housing regulation (Mullins, 1997; Mullins and Murie, 2006). Significant changes emerging between these two periods of analyses were the reduction of regulatory capture by large associations (due to the opening up of the housing association field to wider regulatory interests and

the introduction of direct competition from private developers), an increasing emphasis on tenant interests, and a growing impact of regulatory burden on smaller associations, despite a rhetoric of deregulation (Mullins and Sacranie, 2008).

Table 2-4: Key Interests in Social Housing Regulation 1997 and 2002

Interest Group	Regulatory Regime: 1997		Regulatory Regime: 2002
Larger Housing Associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protection from external competition through registration system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influence in setting standards and protection from competition outweighing regulatory burden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasingly less protection from external competition; 2004 Housing Act allowing for grants to private sector Less influence in housing regulation with increased power of general regulatory bodies
Smaller Housing Associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultative regulation promoting HA interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influential in policy networks but less protection from external competition and more regulatory burden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some proportionate reduction in regulatory burden and deregulation option Compliance costs still substantial Consumer rather than producer focus challenging for smaller associations such as BME associations
Consumers (Tenants)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involvement in performance standards Encouragement of tenant participation but most consumer interests (e.g. tenant complaints and guarantee) dealt with outside the regulatory system 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased emphasis on tenant focus in service delivery Tenants Ombudsman Service and tenant's guarantee still outside Corporation's regulatory system
Taxpayers (Accountability for Public Funds)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-location of funding and regulation to ensure efficiency and value for money Funding conditional on meeting acceptable performance standards 		

Interest Group	Regulatory Regime: 1997	Regulatory Regime: 2002
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unlike price regulation practices in economic regulation of privatised utilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased influence of the Treasury through Public Service Agreements, National Audit Office and Audit Commission Rent restructuring to align with local authority landlords
Private Funders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion in financial regulation and reporting Emphasis on business plans and simplification of reports Private lender interests implicit rather than explicit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More developed systems of financial appraisal to suit complex funding packages Specialist division to evaluate stock transfer business plans Restrictions on diversification to reduce risk for funders Strategic view towards risk management at sector and HA level Overall security for lenders
Policy-makers (Government Social Policy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulatory system used to impose national social policies Supporting professional good practice agenda Preserving unique 3rd sector role of Housing Associations 	

Sources: Mullins (1997); Mullins and Murie (2006)

As a result of the Housing and Regeneration Act in July 2008, the Housing Corporation was replaced in December 2008 by two bodies, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The TSA would act as a new watchdog for social tenants, regulating social housing landlords, setting high standards of management across HAs and at a later date local authority social homes (TSA, 2008). It was established to listen to tenants' concerns and use its powers to make sure tenants were getting a good service, and empower tenants to run their own communities. In theory, the TSA would

have the ability to cut red tape for high performing HAs and intervene for poorly performing ones. The HCA would have responsibility for both the land and the money to deliver new housing, community facilities and infrastructure. Its remit was to ensure that homes are built in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable way, as well as promoting good design. It would also play an important role in regeneration based on the Labour Government's regeneration framework – 'Transforming Places; Changing Lives.' (HC, 2008)

The TSA was fated to have a short regulatory tenure. While it was set up in December 2008, its "full range of regulatory powers" only came into force on 1 April 2010 (TSA, 2010) and by October 2010 in the Review of Social Housing Regulation, plans were being made for the abolition of the TSA by 2012 (DCLG, 2010).

At the time of this case study, of course, there was no indication of the new political horizons that were approaching. In early 2008 debate in the sector was focused on the detail of the Housing and Regeneration Bill. To garner views from stakeholders across the social housing sector and inform the future regulatory regime, the Cave Review was commissioned in 2007. An original analysis of the responses to the Call for Evidence from the review (DCLG, 2007), is the subject of the following section of this chapter.

2.4.2. The Cave Review (2007)

This section of the discussion is based on the detailed original analysis of Cave Review Evidence (DCLG, 2007) conducted by the researcher in the first year of this doctoral research (Sacranie, 2008). Before drawing on that analysis, it is necessary to provide some background to the Cave Review itself.

Prior to the Housing and Regeneration Act of 2008, the Cave Review was commissioned (in December 2006) by the Department for Communities and Local Government to consider changes to the then current system of social housing regulation. The Review had three principal objectives:

‘to ensure continued provision of high quality social housing, to empower and protect tenants and to expand the availability of choice or provider at all levels in the provision of social housing’ (Cave, 2007, p.13).

These objectives suggested an intention to avoid regulatory capture by prioritising the interests of consumers and by opening up competition with existing housing providers. This reinforces the trend of moving away from regulatory capture to regulated competition (Mullins and Murie, 2006). In a further move towards consumers’ interests, Cave (2007, p.14) comments that it is *‘doubly important to enhance tenants’ power and ensure their protection’*. The Cave Review itself suggested three possible models for a new regulatory system: reforming the existing model at the time, a licensing/contract based approach or self-regulation.

Moving onto the evidence base, a broad spectrum of parties responded to the call for evidence by the Review, ranging from HAs (of various sizes) and tenant bodies to regulators and private lenders (DCLG, 2007). These responses provided a further insight into the change drivers and organisational responses in the not-for-profit housing market as introduced above. To gain an overall picture of the sector, and its view on the future of social housing regulation, the researcher considered submissions to the Cave Review from a range of stakeholders, including regulators; lenders; consumer interest groups; tenant bodies; councils and local authorities; housing consultants; trade unions, and large and medium sized HAs (Sacranie, 2008).

The responses from different organisations were not as generalised as would be expected from the various groups of respondents. Views regarding the outlook of regulation varied from self-regulation on one end of the spectrum to maintaining the current regulatory burden on the other. Approaches to ensuring customer accountability and the role of tenants in regulatory structures likewise differed. The researcher identified a lack of consistency on what the core business or activity of HAs should be, which lead logically to inconsistencies about how this core activity should be regulated.

As described earlier, the strategic focus of social housing was changing from letting socially affordable housing to a mixed tenure of housing and diversified activities. In their submission, some HAs made reference to a '*Sustainable communities*' sector rather than a social housing sector, and appeared to embrace their increased social responsibilities as an appropriate role for social

housing providers. Suggestions were even made for having one new regulator to regulate all sustainable community activities in an inclination towards the public sector. Other housing providers resisted this compounding of duties and responsibilities. These HAs regarded the provision of social housing as a core business and were keen to increase private development and diversify into other profit-making related services, so as to increase assets and be more attractive to private funders. This implied a greater sympathy towards private sector models. Place shaping and community work were regarded by some of these HAs as a discretionary service or part of a broader Corporate Social Responsibility programme in much of the same way as a private company.

While inconsistencies were evident in defining the core business of HAs, the researcher nevertheless discovered consistent themes that emerged from the responses. Many submissions called for a '*level playing field*' with non-registered social housing providers or private developers. These developers were not under the jurisdiction of the Housing Corporation but still able to tender for Social Housing Grants, sometimes with loss-making bids to secure tenders. The market entry by private house builders and the desire from HAs for fairer competition emphasised the blurring of boundaries between the not-for-profit and private sectors. It also reflected the more competitive nature of social housing organisations with their desire for growth and development through new build projects rather than just managing existing rental stock.

Another common topic the researcher uncovered in the Cave Review responses was that of '*accountability*.'

As not-for-profit organisations, HAs do make operational surpluses but these are not distributed to shareholders as in the case of private companies, but are rather put back into the social housing or related activities. Regulation, therefore, was seen to be essential to hold social housing organisations accountable and to prevent surpluses leaking into organisational or managerial 'slack'. In the public sector, council tenants could hold their local authority landlords accountable through the democratic process in which they are elected. In the case of HAs, residents exercised no such right, again emphasising a key distinction between the sectors and the need for a regulator to ensure tenants' voices were heard. Indeed a recurring expression in the Cave Review submissions was that the existing regulatory system focused too much on the provider of housing and not enough on the customer. Tenant interest groups, professional bodies, the government and existing regulators advocated a stronger participatory role for residents, continuing the trend established from 1997 to 2002 (See Table 2-4). There were, however, conflicting views from market oriented organisations and private funders suggesting that consumerist models were more appropriate than representational ones and that most residents were not interested in the governance or strategic direction of their landlords but with the quality of every day services. This excerpt from the submission by the Council of Mortgage Lenders makes this point emphatically:

'Being a tenant does not imply an interest in housing management or housing association governance any more than being a mortgage borrower presupposes expertise or interest in managing the mortgage

provider.' (Cave Review, Responses to the Call for Evidence: CML, 2007, p.201).

Another shared response that the researcher found was the importance of regulation to '*reduce risk for lenders*' in the context of increased proportions of private funding and lack of shareholder discipline as discussed above. A positive aspect of the then current regulatory system that was highlighted was the HC's '*effective intervention*' of failing HAs.

Before considering the summary of evidence presented in the next section it is also worth considering some of criticism levelled at the Cave Review in its call for evidence. Not least of these was the under-representation of small HAs (with a stock of less than 5000), which account for 90% of all registered HAs in England, but account for only 40% of the stock (NHF, 2008a).

While larger consumer rights bodies such as the National Consumer Council, and Housing Ombudsman made submissions relating to tenant interests, there were relatively few submissions directly from tenant associations or federations. Some tenant interest groups complained that the short timescale for response made it "*impossible for all but a narrow range of housing professionals, RSLs and Local Authorities to reply*" (Cave Review, Responses to the Call for Evidence: Defend Council Housing, 2007, p. 212) as well as the Review not being publicised enough or open to public debate. This sentiment is echoed by trade unions who that felt that the short timeframe for responses and the low promotion of the review limited the ability of stakeholders to participate. (Cave Review Evidence: Amicus, 2007)

Finally, in interpreting this analysis it is necessary to be aware of the difference between expressed interests emerging from this type of consultation, and underlying interests that emerge from triangulated analyses that match expressed interests to actions. (Mullins and Sacranie, 2008)

2.4.3. Cave Review Evidence- Key Interests and Multiple Stakeholder Views

Table 2-5 provides an extract from a more detailed analysis of the key interests represented in the Cave Review Evidence (Sacranie, 2008)¹⁰. The views expressed here give a flavour of the range of perceptions on the identity of the social housing sector and its positioning between the state and the market. Of particular interest too is the lack of clarity on the core and discretionary roles of social housing association as highlighted by the conflicting views on the regulation of non-core community investment-type activities.

Table 2-5: Key Interests in Social Housing Regulation: 2007/8

Interest Group	Existing/Future Regulatory Regime
Larger Housing Associations Stock >15000	<u>Market/ Private Sector Orientation</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of statutory regulation - increase in self-regulation • Flexible regulation to allow HAs greater freedom to invest reserves in surplus-making activities • Regulation should allow HAs control in managing their assets, including rent setting • Only grant-funded activities should be subject to regulation • HAs should adopt private sector models of governance and best practice • Supports separating the investment and monitoring aspects of the regulator • New regulation should increase accountability to consumers with the regulator as a consumer 'watchdog' role.

¹⁰ See Appendix 1. for the detailed summary of multiple stakeholder views

Interest Group	Existing/Future Regulatory Regime
	<p><u>Public Sector Orientation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation should be aligned with other aspects of the government's sustainable communities policy. • Housing and regeneration organisations should provide complementary services such as local facilities, nurseries and training. • Residents' groups should be incorporated into an organisation's governance structure.
<p>Medium Sized Housing Associations Stock: 5000 >15000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation should be compatible with both large group structures with geographical spread, as well as with smaller locally based associations. • Focus on service outcomes and providing a 'level playing field' for all providers despite their status or size. • Smaller and medium sized housing associations carry a greater burden of regulation • Sceptical of increased self-regulation because of the potential cost burdens, growth of 'super associations' and loss of diversity in the sector. Others see increased self-regulation and the introduction of contractual style regulation as a good idea.
<p>Private Funders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of de-regulation would include loss of confidence by lenders, higher level of risk and higher debt. Credit ratings would suffer as project risks increased. • Present rigid regulation serves as a 'security blanket for lenders' • Apprehension regarding the proposed changes to existing regulation • Regulation saves £200-£400 million a year in lower rates due to reducing risk. (Council of Mortgage Lenders) • Statutory regulation of Outcomes and Governance processes is necessary • 'Self-regulation not an option.'
<p>Tenant Interest Bodies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New regulation should empower tenants to be aware of their rights. (Ombudsman) • Tenants are essentially 'captive consumers' with limited choice and high barriers to switching landlords. (National Consumer Council) • Regulatory agency is needed that operates in the interest of consumers • HA market is 'quasi-private' where regulatory approaches are 'blurred'. • Accountability of social housing providers is 'confused' • Residents know how to make a complaint to their landlord, not against their landlord. • A single regime for both council housing and HA tenants is unacceptable. (Defend Council Housing) • Need to keep the private and public sector distinct and separated by keeping market forces out of social housing. • 'Council tenants want to remain as council tenants with secure tenancies, low rents and democratic rights' (Defend Council Housing)

Interest Group	Existing/Future Regulatory Regime
Public Policy-makers and Regulators	<p><u>Private Sector Orientation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New registration system open to all affordable housing providers to increase the number and range of social housing providers (profit distributing and non-profit distributing) (Housing Corporation) • 'Outcomes focused' regulation, need to 'incentivise efficiency' and promotion of 'best practice' • Regulation should follow a business model: 'culture that is attuned and empathetic to regulating private sector organisations.' (Housing Corporation) • New regulator should pursue the application of private sector disciplines with appropriate business planning arrangements for risk management, leadership of boards and executives, and awareness of shareholder interests. (Audit Commission) <p><u>Public Sector Orientation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory redefinition needed of the core purpose of social housing provider to include wider community needs and interests. (Housing Corporation) • Local Authorities should have a limited regulatory role for housing providers for issues such as neighbourhood management • Public policy over the next two years to be delivered through a diverse set of arrangements – public, private and not-for profit. (Audit Commission) • Reject idea of self regulation- support simplified regulation

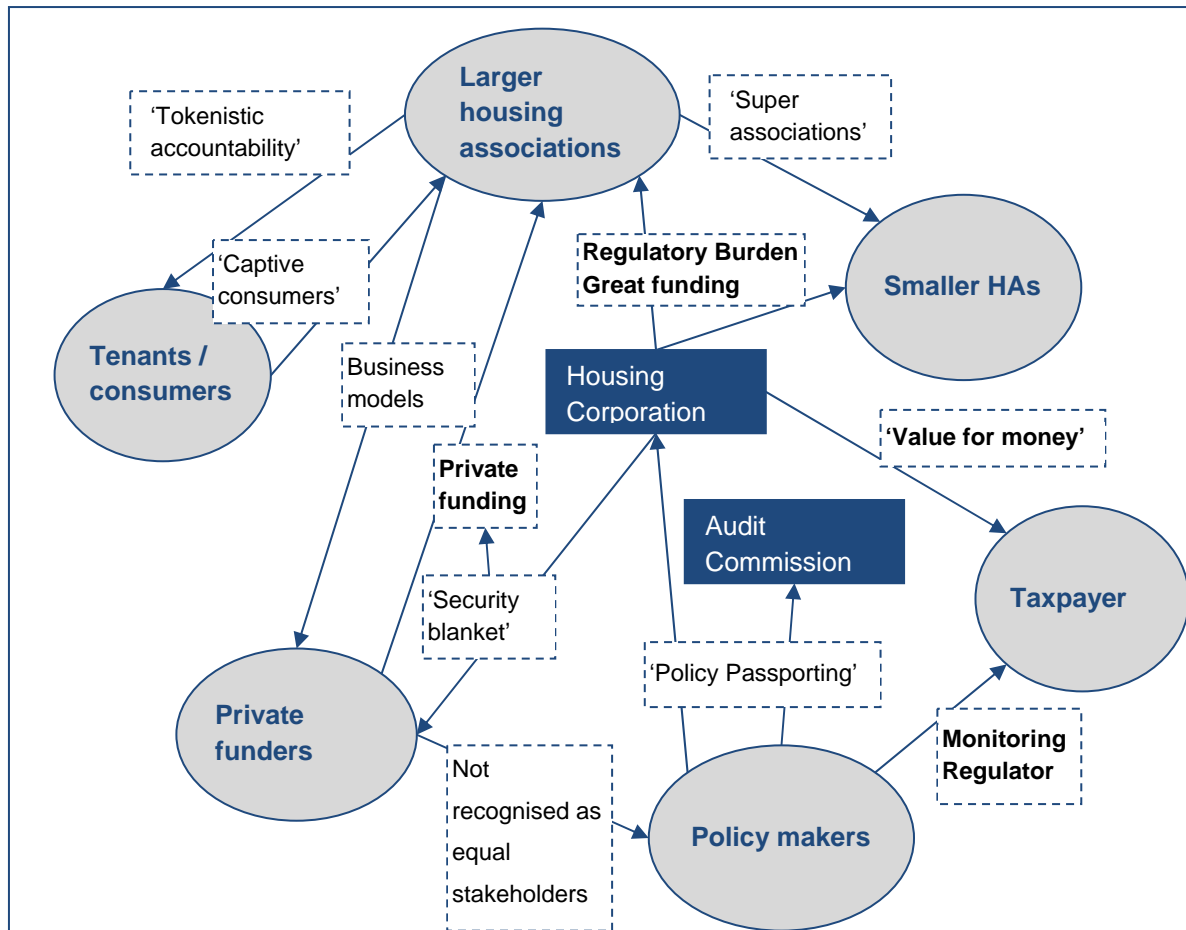
Source: The Author (2008)

Implications from the researcher's analysis of Cave Review Evidence (DCLG, 2007) are summarised in Figure 2-5. This diagram illustrates some of the significant relationships between key stakeholders with regard to social housing regulation.

2.4.4. Cave Review Evidence and Sector Identity

The Responses to the Cave Review's Call for Evidence (DCLG, 2007) provided a fascinating insight into the dynamic housing association sector in England. Not only was the sector diverse in its range of constituents but also in its view of its identity as a sector and its future role in the provision of social housing. On one hand the submissions supported the notion of the not-for-profit sector blurring its boundaries with both the private and public sectors, while on the other, they pointed out fundamental disparities that would always prevent the true convergence of the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. Examples of this can be found in Table 2-4 for instance some large HAs recommending the more self-regulation, and the adoption of private sector models of governance and best practice; while others seeking further alignment with public policy agenda of sustainable communities, through an appropriate regulatory framework.

Figure 2-5: Regulatory Relationships



Source: The Author (2008)

Questions were certainly been raised about the identity of the sector. It was apparent that while there was some commonality of thought across the sector, there is no consistent view of what the core function of housing associations should be in this evolving sector (Sacranie, 2008). To some extent, with the National Housing Federation's active campaign for changes to the Housing Bill (NHF, 2008b), a clearer picture did start to emerge of a more unified sector in its defence of its independent and distinct position in the social housing market.

The threat to sector independence by a burden of over-regulation particular in areas deemed to be local authority responsibilities (such as regeneration and community investment), resulted in the National Housing Federation (NHF, 2008c) lobbying the House of Lords to make changes to the proposed Bill. A Peers Briefing document read that

“...The Bill, as it entered the Commons, contained so much potential state control over associations that it risked their being reclassified as public bodies,” and that one of the key roles of regulation was to

“protect the independent not-for profit business model of associations and their non-public body status.” (NHF, 2008, p.2)

Considering the broader implications from the analysis of Cave Review Evidence (Sacranie, 2008) , it is clear that the role of regulation in shaping the identity of third sector housing is of particular relevance as it both reflects and contributes to fundamental tensions prevalent at the time. These included the tensions between the role of regulation in providing comfort to private lenders (as reflected in Table 2-4) at the same time as promoting wider public goals. Underlying tensions were also evident between resource and policy drivers stressing efficiency, cost reduction and risk management, at the same time as fulfilling local accountability and community expectations (Mullins, 2006). There was undoubtedly a conflict between the wish to preserve an independent identity of the sector to support private borrowing and connect with civil society, and the desire of governments to control activities of HAs to best leverage capital subsidies and accumulated assets to meet policy goals such as

maximising affordable housing output and achieving sustainable community development. Furthermore, with the private banking sector financing not-for-profit HAs to deliver public realm services, a blurring of sector boundaries was taking place with the privatisation of public services, or the nationalisation of private equity, depending on one's perspective on the prevailing paradox. It was this paradox, exemplified in responses to divergent demands that seemed to reinforce the hybrid character of housing association.

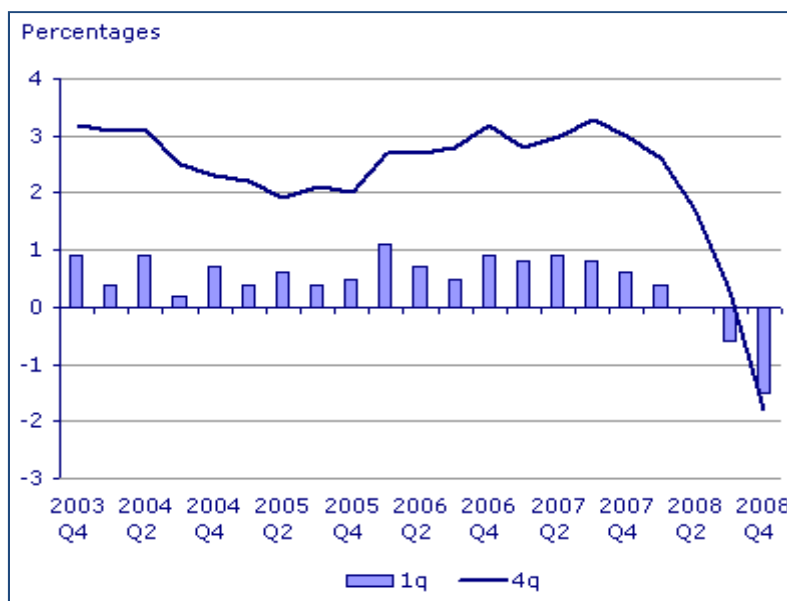
2.5. Changing Economic Conditions – Impacts of the Credit Crunch and Recession

2.5.1. The Credit Crunch and Recession

The impending policy changes that would be enacted in the Housing and Regeneration Act in July 2008 were a dominant issue in the HA sector in the first year of this study. Towards September 2008 the policy debate was replaced at the top of industry priorities by the dramatic economic conditions that were emerging globally and in the UK. The last quarter of 2008 and the first quarter of 2009 were dominated by extraordinary economic events with the collapse of credit markets, failure of banks, stock market plunges, industry slowdowns and housing market downturn (Elliot, 2008). Like a giant game of dominoes, what seemed to start off with a sub-prime mortgage crisis in the US arrived, via stock market crashes, credit market stagnation, a housing market slowdown, currency devaluation and hyper deflation at the official declaration of

the UK going into recession on Friday 23 January 2009 (Giles and Andrew, 2009). The figures that officially confirmed the recession status were the latest quarterly GDP figures from the Office for National Statistics which reveal that Gross Domestic Profit (GDP) in the UK decreased by 1.5% in the last quarter of 2008, compared to a decrease of 0.6% in the previous quarter. (Office for National Statistics, 2009) Significantly for the housing industry, construction decreased by 1.1 % cent, compared with a decrease of 0.2% in the previous quarter.

Figure 2-6: GDP Growth: UK Output Decreased by 1.5% in Q4 2008



Source: Office for National Statistics, 2009

Looking back over the previous years it became clear to see that the UK and US economies had been growing on unsustainable debt, with consumers living beyond their means. The high levels of consumerism and spending saw a rapid

increase in asset prices, particularly of homes. Lenders addressed this by relaxing the criteria for loans, granting mortgages to high risk borrowers, with poor credit and with a high risk of defaulting on payments. Because of the sophistication and complexity of financial markets, and arguably the bonus-orientated, short-termism of investment bankers and fund managers, lenders were able to disguise this poor or sub-prime debt in debt bundles mixed up with good quality mortgages and then sold these debt packages through securitisation. By the summer of 2007, the money raised through securitisation was funding more than half of Britain's mortgages. (Elliot, 2008) The biggest risk this system was exposed to (as the IMF and Bank of England had warned) was a steep fall in house prices, since securitisation was based on an assumption of the increased value of property to compensate for stretched borrowing. By July 2007, the housing market in the US was in sharp downturn with mortgage-backed securities worth less than anyone had suspected. The market lost confidence and banks stopped lending to one another, then sought to regroup and repair by cutting back on lending to their customers. Borrowing became less accessible and more costly, which led ultimately to the 'credit crunch.'

2.5.2. Recessionary impacts on the social housing sector

The impact of the recession on the social housing sector was best viewed in the context of the general housing market downturn in the UK, with the dramatic slowdown in the housing and mortgage markets as well as an increasing

number of possessions and mortgage arrears. A reduced number of lenders became active in the market; less funding was available from these fewer lenders, and these combined with a lack of consumer confidence were attributed as influencing factors in the downturn. (Council of Mortgage Lenders, 2008)

Gross mortgage lending fell to an estimated £12.6 billion in December 2008, down 11% from £14.2 billion in November and 47% on December 2007, the lowest monthly figure since April 2001 (CML, 2009). The increase in unemployment and general effects of the recession were also seen to be likely to increase arrears or risk of repossessions. (CML, 2009)

So how did these figures affect social landlords? Due to the grant funded activity of HAs, one could have expected them to be less exposed to risk during a credit crunch and housing downturn. However, since on average only a third of housing association development activity was financed through capital grants and the rest leveraged through banks and private lenders, the use of a cross subsidy model (that is using income from shared ownership properties and outright sales to supplement the social renting and maintenance aspect of the business) increased the level of risk in the sector. With regard to the slowdown in social housing property sales, published data indicated that the length of time taken from initial viewing to completion was longer and prospective purchasers were experiencing more difficulty in arranging a mortgage (HC, 2008). The development pipeline for shared ownership also meant that around a 1,000 new

homes a month were still coming on to the market for sale during the recessionary period, leading to an increased backlog of voids (HC, 2008).

Some of the key factors, therefore, increasing the exposure of the social housing sector to the credit crunch and housing market slowdown were the lack of availability of mortgage finance for purchasers and its impact on low cost home ownership (LCHO) sales, finance market constraints, (HC, 2008) interest rate volatility, falling property prices, (RICS, 2008), rising unemployment and reduced consumer confidence.

a) Falling House Prices, Impairment and Damaged Cross Subsidy Models

House prices in the UK had increased rapidly over the previous 10 years due largely to wide mortgage availability. The constriction of the mortgage market (for example with the extinction of 100% mortgages) had had a deeply negative impact on house prices. The continuous fall in house prices had a strong bearing on the social housing sector, not only in reducing the return on new housing developments but by depreciating the asset value of existing housing stock and landbanks against which private finance was secured. These impairment costs were affecting the business plans of HAs and their ability to reinvest in their housing stock in the form of repairs and maintenance, and therefore a source of major concern in the sector at the time. Recessionary pressures for increasing cost management were a consequence as well as a focus on the financial reporting of impairment costs, that is the loss of value of land and unsold new property stock.

Falling house prices and valuations put the level of surplus or cross subsidy from outright sales at risk. The cross subsidy model, that is HAs using income from shared ownership properties and outright sales to supplement the social renting business, was an essential to the business plans of these organisations. Since only a third of HA activity was activity was funded through capital grants, and the rest leveraged through banks and private lenders as well as the cross subsidy surpluses, this business model increased the exposure of HAs to the housing market slowdown, falling house prices and finance market constraints.

b) Finance Markets and Re-pricing Debt

Despite social landlords being regarded by banks and private investors as less risky borrowers (being regulated by the government), the cost of borrowing for HAs had increased, as a direct result of the credit crunch, from the long-term average of 0.35 % above Libor to 1.5% above Libor Caps with stricter conditions attached. Like the reduction in the number of lenders in the residential market observed by the CML above, there were also fewer lenders in the UK social housing sector with the withdrawal of some banks such as Nationwide (Silverman, 2008).

According to the Housing Corporation's 4th Quarterly Market Survey in 2008, HAs faced some of the most challenging times known to the sector (HC, 2008). The survey, conducted in October 2008 included 216 associations, of which the 100 largest developers were a part. The findings,

while still optimistic about the long term future of the sector, acknowledged the increased exposure of some associations with high private finance and a high proportion of shared ownership schemes. Some key insights were that HAs were most concerned about finance markets (both for new finance and particularly in relation to existing debt) as well as the reduced funders in the market after the banking sector turmoil.

While most associations had loan facilities that covered more than two years worth of projected loan draw-downs, a small number of associations were intending to raise new debt: of the £5.5 billion associations intended to draw down from loan facilities in the following 12 months, only £0.3 billion, or 5% of the total, was new debt which had still to be arranged. However even when new debt did not have to be raised, the re-evaluation of properties to secure debt meant that more time was needed to comply with security requirements before funds could be drawn. The greater involvement of bank credit departments and committees meant that arranging draw-downs of existing facilities or changes to loan agreements for HAs could also take much longer. (HC, 2008)

c) Government action

The Government had been under pressure from many different sectors to stabilise the economy and encourage the opening up of credit markets again. With the housing downturn one of the key factors in the recession, it

was not surprising that the government launched a number of new schemes to support the housing market and affordable housing sector. Examples of these were the 'Rent to Homebuy' and a 'mortgage rescue scheme' to help vulnerable homeowners avoid repossession (NHF, 2009). Additionally the government incentivised local councils to increase the supply of affordable housing as well as helping the ailing construction industry with a Kickstart Programme in 2009.

The Rent to Home Buy scheme was targeted at first-time buyers and households with earnings below £60,000 per annum, and would be operated in partnerships through social housing providers, local councils and the private sector. The scheme allowed individuals or families to rent homes at a discounted rate, for two or three years, after which they had the option to buy 25% or more of the property at any time and was initially introduced in Barking and Dagenham, Newcastle, Nottingham and Manchester.

The mortgage rescue scheme worked through two options: shared equity and Government Mortgage to Rent. The shared equity scheme was designed for owner-occupiers still with an income and with a significant equity in their home, whereby a housing association would provide a flexible equity loan between 25 and 75% of the homeowner's current mortgage to reduce repayments. The mortgage to rent scheme was aimed at very vulnerable, low-income households who could no longer afford to sustain a mortgage. A housing association would buy the property and the household

could remain there, renting the property back from the housing association at an affordable rent of 20% less than a private rent.

In a push to increase the supply of affordable housing another interesting development occurred contrary to the trend of diminishing council housing stocks. In January 2009, the then housing minister Margaret Beckett announced that councils would be allowed to keep the rental income from homes they either buy, build, or bring back into use, to invest in new housing (Rogers, 2009). Councils would also be allowed to keep the proceeds if these homes were sold to tenants through the Right to Buy scheme. This incentive was particularly unusual given that the number of new council homes constructed each year had plunged from 12,960 in 1990 to just 310 in 2008. The move to encourage local councils to invest in new housing could be seen in the context of the 2008/09 stock transfer programme (from councils to HAs) which at the time was predicted to be the smallest in years due to funding constraints in the social housing sector. The Department for Communities and Local Government figures showed just 22,937 units would be set for transfer in England from 2008 - 2010 (Social Housing Journal, 2008).

The Government's Kickstart 2009 programme set aside a £1.06 billion to help house builders and developers restart stalled projects, the aim being to get the construction of around 22000 new homes back on track. The then housing minister, John Healy, had emphasised that the scheme was not a

handout to developers, but that less than a fifth of the £1.06 billion would be awarded as direct grants and nearly half the money would have to be repaid within five years. Furthermore this scheme was also linked to the sustainable communities' agenda, encouraging developers bidding for Kickstart funding to offer apprenticeships and jobs to local people.

2.5.3. Change Drivers and Economic Conditions

Parkinson and Ball (2009) succinctly capture the impact of deteriorating economic conditions on the housing market in the UK:

'In simple terms it means that lenders won't lend, borrowers can't borrow, builders can't build and buyers can't buy.' (Parkinson and Ball, 2009)

In a little more detail, Table 2-6. contrasts key change drivers and organisational responses before and after the credit crunch to reveals the impacts of the changing economic conditions on the social housing sector in the UK.

Table 2-6: Before and After the Credit Crunch: Economic Impacts on the Not-For-Profit Housing Sector

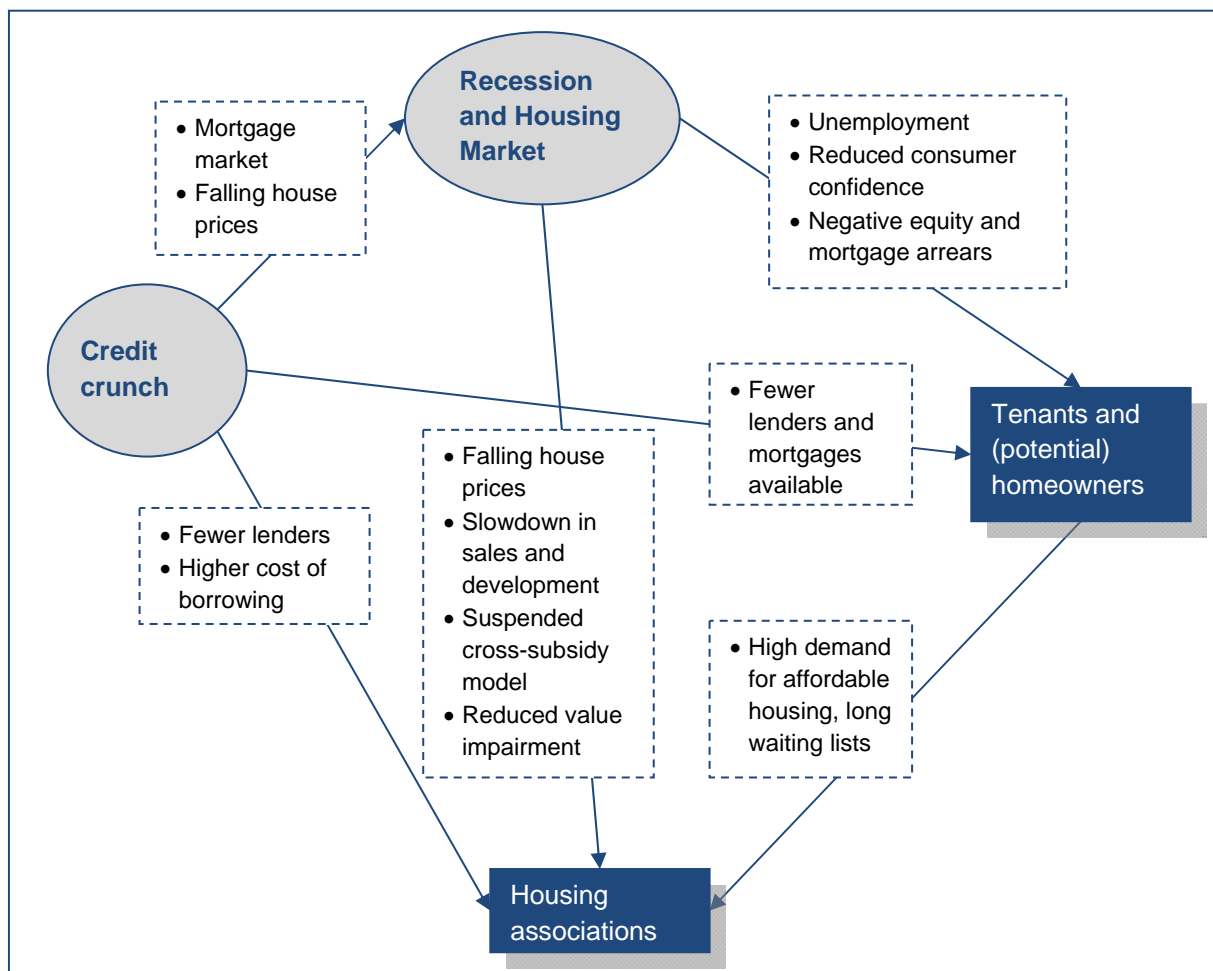
JANUARY 2008		JANUARY 2009	
Change Drivers	Organisational Responses	Change Drivers	Organisational Responses
<p>Mixed Funding (1989)</p> <p>Growth in Private Funding, (to rely less on capital funding)</p> <p>Accountability to Lenders</p>	<p>Private Sector Business Models</p> <p>Increased Financial Reporting</p> <p>Diversification to increase income/ Sticking to core product to reduce risk</p>	<p>Loan Re-pricing</p> <p>Credit Crunch- limited credit, increased cost of borrowing</p> <p>Fewer banks/lenders with less to lend at higher rates</p> <p>Housing market downturn- cross subsidy model no longer applicable</p>	<p>Increased financial monitoring</p> <p>Different finance options e.g. Recent bonds issued in the sector have raised over £0.5bn.</p> <p>Lengthier process to draw down debt (re-evaluation of properties) so accurate and timely cash flow forecasting important</p> <p>Scaling back new development ,looking for new market niches</p>
Efficiency Agenda	<p>Changes in Governance and Management</p> <p>Streamlining;</p> <p>Business Models</p> <p>Competition to attract skilled staff and board members</p>	<p>Efficiency drive due to Credit Crunch</p> <p>Housing market downturn</p> <p>Reduced development programmes</p> <p>Lenders renegotiating higher rates for new debt</p>	<p>Some HAs failing</p> <p>Tighter finances and cost management</p> <p>Risk averse business models</p> <p>Redundancies within development staff but also good recruitment market for retaining quality staff</p> <p>Reduced likelihood for mergers/ rescues or changing legal entities</p>
Internal Competition Economies of Scale	Mergers and Alliances to reduce overheads/ operating costs	Risk aversion- less competition in volatile markets	Reduced merger activity but opportunities for large, financially stable HAs to take over or acquire small to

JANUARY 2008		JANUARY 2009	
Change Drivers	Organisational Responses	Change Drivers	Organisational Responses
Growing Regulatory Burden	Procurement savings Growth and Expansion	Economies of scale New Regulatory Bodies	medium HAs Streamlining and consolidation Growth and expansion through buying developers stock off shelf Debate continuing over regulatory remit
Accountability - Consumer (tenant)	Consumerist approach to customer care, customer satisfaction Survival of more direct representation: tenants on boards	Accountability to tenants via new Tenant Services Authority	Debate around tenant role in governance and 'ownership' of HAs Consumerist approach to customer care still prevalent
Accountability - Public (neighbourhoods) Public Policy Government Social Agenda	Community investment and support services Regeneration and eco schemes Local Strategic partnerships Neighbourhood anchorage (Wadhams, 2006)	Accountability and government social agenda through new Housing and Communities Agency	Debate regarding regulatory burden of responsibility to provide social services. Corporate Social Responsibility as a hard edged, strategic solution to community engagement and accountability to society
External Competition: private developers/contractors	Sector wide call for 'level playing field' with private sector entrants (links to de-regulation agenda). Minority view need to preserve third sector identity as USP differentiator	Credit Crunch, Recession and housing industry downturn	Developers as 'new best friends' selling/off-loading bargain stock to Housing associations New external competition perhaps from councils as government provides financial incentives for developing new council housing.

Source: The Author (2008)

An overview of industry data revealed various inter-connected factors demonstrating the significant impact of the credit crunch and market downturn on the social housing sector. Figure 2-7 below highlights these critical factors, showing the changing dynamics of stakeholders in the sector, particularly in relations to HAs and tenants or potential homeowners.

Figure 2-7: Impacts of the Credit Crunch on Key Stakeholders in the HA Sector



Source: The Author (2009)

2.6. Blurred Boundaries and Third Sector Hybridity

Over the duration of this research project, industry concerns had shifted from an intense regulatory debate to the impact of the credit crunch and economic downturn on the HA sector. However the same pertinent questions that arose from debate around regulation were still prevalent in discussions around financial and market conditions, that is those relating to the positioning of the not-for profit sector between the public domain and private market, and the identity and values, core functions and responsibilities of HAs.

Questions had been raised as to how the hybrid model of HAs, sitting between the private and public sectors was attempting to balance consumer with producer interests, and efficient management with local service delivery. The evidence from recessionary impacts on the sector had suggested that the cross subsidy business model was faltering if not broken. And since it was this cross subsidy business model that has shaped and to some extent emancipated HAs, its suspension was bound to change the character and strategic direction of the maturing third sector.

Returning to the Cave Review Evidence (DCLG, 2007), in Table 2-4 the author has differentiated between public and private sector perspectives. Of course it is essentially because of the hybrid nature of the third sector (Billis, 2009; Gruis, 2008) that HAs can be both commercial and social at the same time. In the analysis of Cave Review responses, even claims staked firmly in the direction of private markets or in the public realm were still undercut by niggling contradictions. For instance housing providers which were principally aligned to

public sector causes often still relied on private funding to support their activities. Market-orientated HAs on the other hand, employed grant funding or grant funded assets to leverage private equity. This blurring of sector boundaries was disorientating for some stakeholders who felt that

‘Organisations are either part of a sector or not...hybrid arrangements will serve no-one’ (Cave Review, Responses to the Call for Evidence, 2007, p. 8).

However, while the ambiguity of a hybrid model may be not universally appealing, the evidence presented by the Cave Review submissions (2007) essentially depicts HAs as truly hybrid organisations sitting between the state and the market, continually balancing competing drivers. This is reflected in the Housing Corporation’s response to the Cave Review, which acknowledges the need for balance between private sector orientation and encouragement for commercially focused organisations at the same as a promotion of broader social objectives, (DCLG, 2007) in other words locating HAs in a hybrid zone between state, market and society.

Recent work in the social housing field (Gruis, 2009, Czischke 2009) has explored these contested influences of state, market and society drivers within hybrid third sector organisations as part of a growing body of literature on the social entrepreneurial identities in third sector housing organisations in Europe (Brandsen et al 2006, Heino et al 2006, Gruis 2008, Czischke, Gruis and Mullins 2008).

In a detailed deconstruction of the term social enterprise, Teasdale (2010) contends that social enterprise can be regarded more as a label than an organisational form and that *“Social enterprise has been constructed by a variety of competing interests embracing different discourses and representing different organisational constituents”* (2010, p.15)

The use of the term social enterprise to describe HAs is not as common in the English context as in the case other EU countries (Czischke, Gruis, and Mullins, D. 2010), although the expression ‘social business’, as in Teasdale’s diagram in Figure 2-8, is more evident as in the case of HAX.

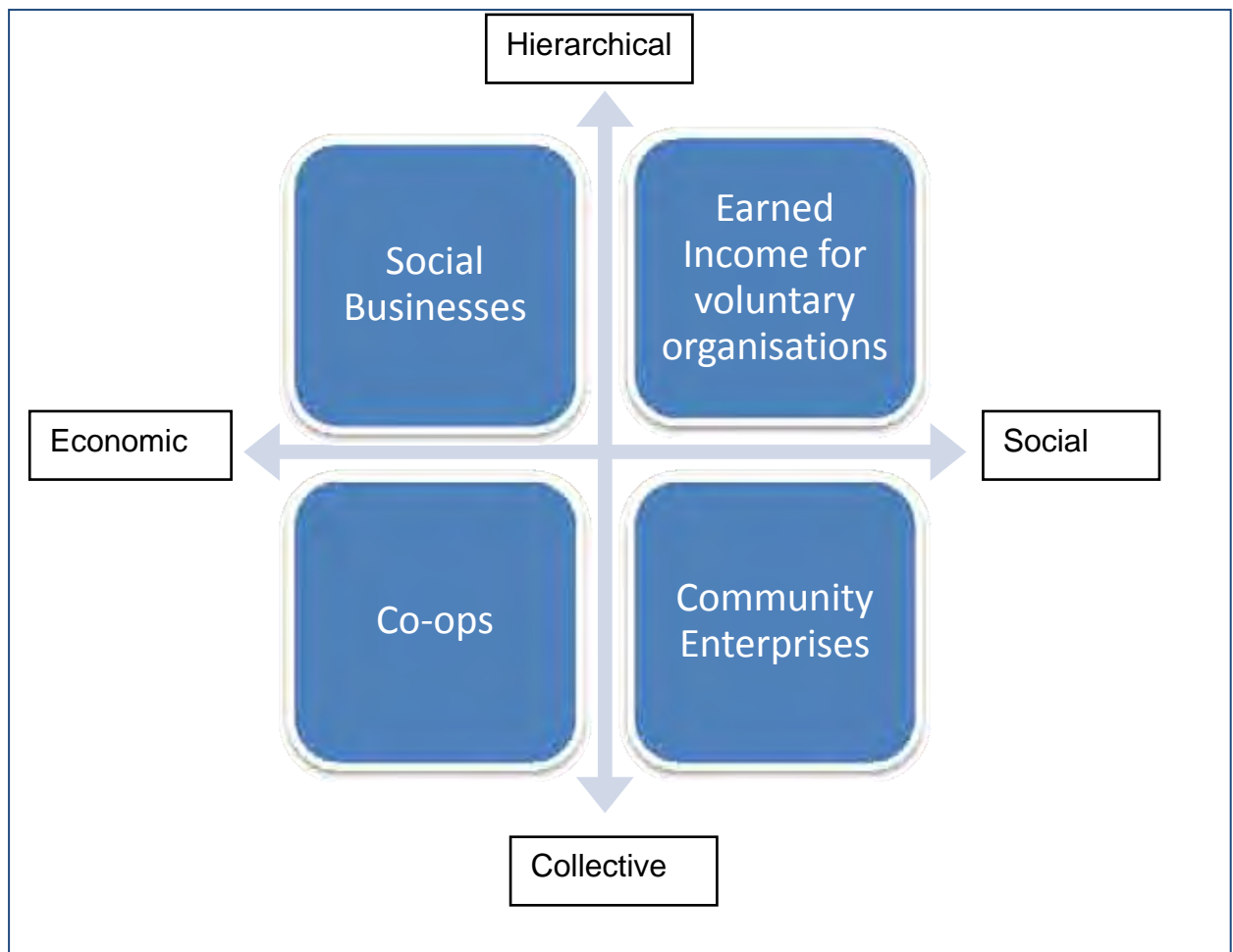
Nevertheless, the overlap between the hybrid character of the HA sector and the conceptualisation of social enterprises in social housing literature make it very relevant to this discussion. A case in point is the argument around the adoption of CSR in a social housing context. Mullins and Sacranie (2008) adopt Gruis’s (2009) triangle figure of social entrepreneurship with contested influences of state, market and society drivers within organisational strategies and cultures, to contextualise CSR in the HA sector. Figure 2-9 locates CSR as one mechanism for managing hybridity, and labels this as a mechanism derived most strongly from the market characteristics of HAs.

Billis and Rochester (2010) also recognise these contested influences on organisational cultures and strategies of third sector organisations:

‘What we are now facing are fundamental changes in the nature of the organisations that are financing, planning and delivering welfare. It is not

just the "economy", but the organisations themselves that have become "mixed!" (Billis and Rochester, 2010, p,12)

Figure 2-8: Conceptualising social enterprise organisational forms and discourses

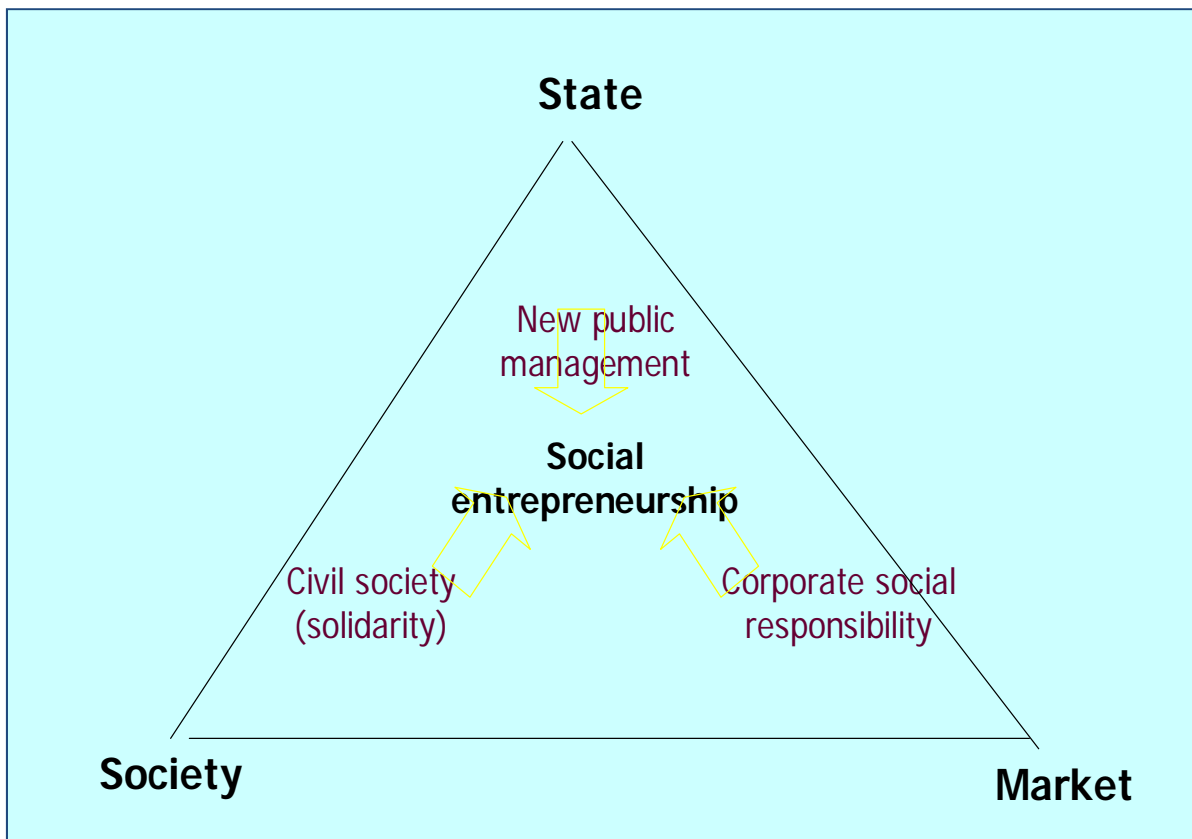


Source: Teasdale (2010, p. 5)

This multi-layered case study of a large HA provided the ideal opportunity to empirically explore a 'mixed' organisation and observe the enactment of this hybridity in the contested forces of market, state and society within the

organisation, uncovered through new strategic directions in CI and changing organisational cultures at HAX.

Figure 2-9: Positioning CSR within the hybrid social housing organisations



Source: Mullins and Sacranie (2008, p. 5) based on Gruis (2009) Conceptualising Social Enterprise in Housing

2.7. Key Emerging Issues: Strategic Management, Organisational Culture and Community Investment:

From the critical sector analysis that has been the subject of this chapter, a number of recurrent themes emerged which broadly captured the change

factors and tensions in the sector, and were emerging too in the scoping fieldwork conducted at HAX. The underlying themes of new strategic directions, changing organisational culture and competing logics driving these changes will be expanded on and framed theoretically (Chapter 4) before being explored in the case study findings (Chapters 5 to 9) that are the empirical contribution of this project.

From an initial suggested remit which included exploring the changing management, governance and accountability of HAs, the research topic for this project had evolved to: 'Strategy, Culture and Institutional Logics: A multi-layered view of community investment at a large housing association.' In the part-inductive, part-deductive approach to this study, the sector analysis described in this chapter was critical in refining the research aims of this project:

a) Why Strategy/ Strategic Management?

Change drivers and their impact on HAs had been considered, as well as the evolution of HAs from a historic context through to the current hybrid third sector status (Mullins and Riseborough, 2000; Gruis, 2008). The rationalisation of the sector manifested in pre-recession increase in merger activity, creating mega organisations in the top echelons of the sector. These large commercial organisations needed to strategically balance achieving efficiency goals and economies of scale with local service delivery and accountability. The analysis of the Cave Review Evidence (2007) revealed a lack of consensus regarding the core function of social HAs, particularly with regard to diversification into private markets on the one hand, and performing social or community services

formerly undertaken in the public sector. 'Strategy' was deemed an appropriate focus to explore internal and external stimuli on the case study organisation (particularly in a dynamic post-merger context) and a relevant indicator of the organisation's trajectory in attempting to fulfil its corporate objectives.

b) Why Organisational Culture and Subcultures?

This sector review has shown that with regard to organisational culture there had been a pronounced shift from traditional organisational structures towards a form of social entrepreneurship. The emergence of mega HAs with an expanding scale of operations, the efficiency drive to maximise returns from a diminishing public grant, and the increasing importance of private lenders as stakeholders has resulted in a growing corporate culture with an emphasis on business models, strategic planning and increased financial reporting. However scale was not the only variable determining the 'corporateness' of these associations. Evidence presented to the Cave Review (2007) seemed to suggest interestingly that it was not the size of the organisation that determined the strategic direction of these organisations i.e. some large organizations expressed a greater empathy with public sector values while some smaller organisations were more market-oriented or corporate in their outlook. On closer inspection, the determining variable appeared to be the organisational culture of the organisation and its perception of its own identity and role within the housing sector (Sacranie, 2008).

c) Why Community Investment?

Inherent to the philanthropic or local authority legacy of some HAs was a sense of civic duty and accountability to tenants and communities. However the regulatory debate evident in the Cave Review evidence (2007) revealed a divergence of views in relation to what constitutes 'housing plus' activities (or activities beyond the core function of providing and managing social rented accommodation), while the burden of responsibility for neighbourhood investment and some community social services emerged as a bone of contention. Resentment towards 'policy passporting' by the regulator, being set agendas by local and national government, taking on responsibility for non-core services and the possibility of being regulated for these resulted in the National Housing Federation's campaign in 2008, in defence of the third sector identity and independence. Issues relating to third sector accountability were also critical to this debate. While social HAs appeared to adopt characteristics of both public and private companies, essential difference were in the lack of formal accountability to either local communities (as with council housing) or shareholders (as in the private companies) This apparent vacuum of accountability was seen to be an area of public concern. The choice therefore of exploring the changing strategic direction of CI at HAX tied in with sector-level questions regarding the accountability of HAs to local communities, and made reference again to one of the critical themes included in the original topic for this doctoral research (that is the *accountability* of HAs).

2.8. Conclusion

Having undertaken a critical analysis of the social housing sector to uncover the central themes, the following Chapter 4 maps and develops those themes into a framework which is the theoretical reference point for the empirical case study. Chapter 5 then considers the research methodology and methods employed to conduct this case study project. The volatility of the market and dynamic nature of the social housing sector, as well as the shift in focus from regulatory pressures to economic drivers in the space of a few months highlight the importance of having a flexible methodology and being reflexive throughout the research process to adequately capture and reflect these changes. At the same time, the fortuitous timing of this research project at a particularly fascinating period in the history of the non-profit housing sector, and indeed the broader political and economic context, will hopefully contribute to the richness and interest of the research findings.

CHAPTER 3:

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT, ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

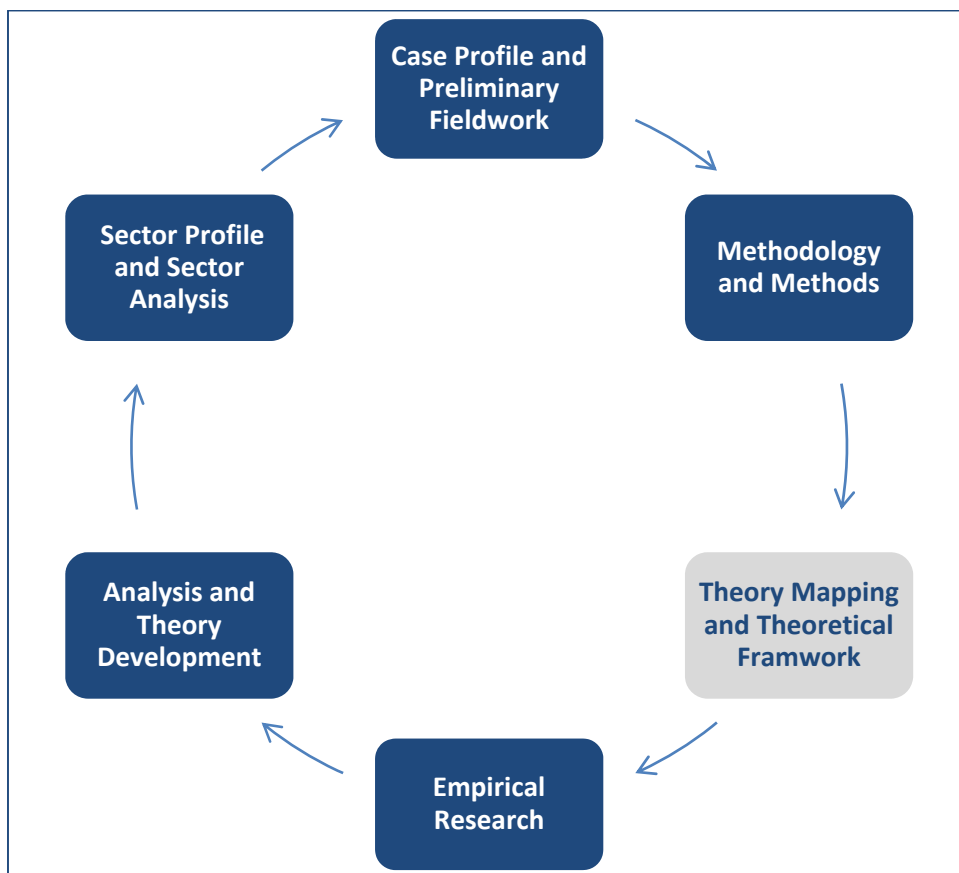
3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter (Chapter 2: Sector Analysis) concludes by identifying the key issues which emerged from the critical analysis of the social housing sector using industry literature, academic texts and a critique of policy and government-commissioned reports. The purpose of this chapter is to locate these issues in a theoretical context, and to illustrate how the theory of institutional logics can be developed and applied to explore the evolving CI strategy at HAX in relation to its changing and dominant organisational sub-cultures.

In the research cycle of this project (Figure 3-1), the process of theory mapping is located after the stages of sector analysis, preliminary fieldwork and methodology and methods. It could equally, however, been located at the 'start' of the process because of the non-linear, iterative progression of parallel stages (as emphasised by the use of the cycle as a recurrent diagrammatic tool). The introduction to this thesis outlines, and the ensuing chapter on methodology will endeavour to illustrate in further detail, the part-deductive, part-inductive

research approach adopted for this research project. It is nevertheless critical in the introduction of this chapter to reiterate the continuous interplay between theory, methodology, contextual analysis and preliminary fieldwork that was typical of the entire research process.

Figure 3-1: The Research Cycle – Theory Mapping and Theoretical Framework



Source: The Author (2010)

At the project's inception, the exciting but also daunting remit of exploring '*The changing management, governance and accountability of large not-for profit housing associations*' provided the opportunity to undertake the case study research from a wide array of theoretical viewpoints. A cursory overview of the

key concepts in this suggested title provided a plethora of possible theoretical routes for the PhD research to travel along. A superficial familiarity with the organisation and the industry it operated in did not seem sufficient to explore only a few particular areas of theory and by default eliminate other potentially relevant schools of knowledge that could be pertinent to the research. An early attempt to explore some of these paths more fully led to an overwhelming volume of relevant choices that would take well beyond the three year scope of this project to fully develop. The exceedingly wide choice of literature fields that were potentially appropriate included Corporate Governance; Strategic Management; Organisational Change Theory and Change Management; Third Sector Organisational Studies; New Public Management; Welfare Economics; Organisational Behaviour; Organisational Culture and Identity; Corporate Social Responsibility; Customer Relationship Management, UK Housing Policy, and Housing Economics, which is to name more than a few, but by no means an exhaustive list.

Thus with a broad suggested topic in mind, an alternative tactic was sought by which to construct a relevant theoretical framework for this case study project by conducting a sector analysis and preliminary scoping fieldwork. Using the subject areas from the initial topic, key themes identified in the sector analysis, and emerging issues from initial engagement with HAX, the focus of the research enquiry on 'Strategy, Culture and Community Investment' was fixed

early on in the first year of the PhD.¹¹The development of a theoretical framework therefore incorporated both deductive and inductive approaches that tie into the overall research methodology of this study.¹²

While the primary theoretical contribution of the thesis is in relation to institutional theory, it also draws on ideas from management studies and organisational culture which also need to be theoretically rooted. Within the strategic management field, there is extensive established literature relating to strategic positioning (Porter, 1985; Johnson and Scholes, 2002) and the strategic process (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). Most strategic management theory has been conceived in a profit-making context, but there has been growing application to the not-for-profit sector, and also opportunities for theoretical generalisation in the cross-pollination of theory in a case study research project. Moving on to organisational culture, this field of study is a well-developed thread of organisational theory (Brown, 1995). Links in theory between culture, strategy, leadership, power and organisational structures have been clearly established (Miles and Snow, 1978; Handy, 1993; Johnson, 1992; Schein, 1997) as was the concept of organisational sub-cultures or groups exhibiting a common identity and value system (Hofstede, 1983; Gregory, 1983)

The next section in this chapter will provide an overview of the key management and organisational theories which led to the adoption of assumptions that were

¹¹ An overview of the multi-layered rationale behind the choice of these key themes has been provided in the first chapter of this thesis.

¹² This part deductive, part-inductive methodological approach is described in further detail in the following Chapter 5

incorporated as part of the theoretical framework for this project. These assumptions are:

- Conceptualising strategy as an emergent process (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985)
- The concept of cultural paradigms, sub-cultures or multiple identities revealing shared groups of characteristics within organisations (Schein, Hofstede, 1983)

Based on this initial theoretical mapping the research project methodology was further developed, with a fieldwork plan and topic guides designed to explore the development of CI strategy over 2 years at HAX, using mini-case studies to gain a multi-layered view of the organisation. As data emerged over the course of the fieldwork, the researcher endeavoured to uncover and develop a theoretical link between CI strategy and organisational sub-cultures, by which to frame the research findings and make an original academic contribution. Emerging empirical evidence therefore helped inform the choice of appropriate theories to adopt and adapt for this research. This theory had to be 'compatible' with the layered aims of this study, to explore cultures at multiple view points as well as capturing some of the tensions in the third sector of social housing enacted in a case study of a large HA. A number of routes were considered, building on management theory, adopting a social constructionist model and as well as considering Corporate Social Responsibility frameworks. Ideally the

theoretical perspective would be relevant too in literature in the field of social housing.

As the primary evidence was gathered, the emerging data seemed to corroborate with a view of competing institutional logics (Scott, 2001; Thornton, 2004) which had already been applied in a social housing context (Mullins, 2006). Without pre-empting the empirical evidence to follow there appeared to be strong links between a dominant corporate culture at the organisation and the efficiency logic described by Mullins (2006), as well as ties between accountability logic and regional, locally-responsive culture. In conducting the multiple mini-case study analyses, the researcher sought to identify both dominant sub-cultures as well as key institutional logics, using some pre-determined themes such as efficiency and accountability as starting points in the systematic reduction of qualitative data. In this way institutional logics was built into the theoretical framework of the research as a linking dimension with organisational sub-cultures, specifically to better understand the strategic direction of CI at HAX, and broadly to build on existing literature regarding the future directions and shifts in culture and identity of the social housing sector in the UK.

The next few sections will attempt to map each of the core theoretical concepts for this project, that is strategy, organisational culture and institutional logics. The key and related theories employed in the theoretical framework for this case study research will be highlighted before the final section will illustrate how these distinct but relatable theories are connected in a research framework, that

is in itself multi-layered through the overlapping of management (strategic), organisational (cultural) and institutional theory.

3.2. Strategic Management

Strategy is broadly concerned with the issues, decisions and actions affecting a firm or organisation. These issues are related to both the direction the organisation wishes to take and the scope of activity to enable it do so:

‘The issue of scope of activity is fundamental to strategy because it concerns the way in which those responsible for managing the organisation conceive the organisation’s boundaries.’ (Johnson and Scholes, 2002, p. 5)

The notion of scope and boundaries is particularly critical to third sector of social housing where arguably the boundaries of what constitutes the core service of social landlords has been blurred. CI is a pertinent example of this lack of clarity as the onus of responsibility for providing these types of service shifts between public, private and, as in this case study, third sector organisations.

The purpose of strategic management can be viewed as achieving sustainable competitive advantage i.e. being different or better than competitors over the

long term. Strategy can be pinned down in long and short term goals, and it is intrinsically linked to an organisation's resources, whether they are financial, physical, human or knowledge-based (Johnson and Scholes, 2002). Indeed the relationship between resources and external circumstances forms the basis of much of the critical literature and theory on the subject. The concept of strategic fit and stretch (Porter, 1985) is an example of managing internal resources in different contexts. While external fit relates to an organisation positioning itself to meet demands in the external environment, internal fit is the scope and direction of activities to match those. Strategic stretch occurs where resources are leveraged to create an opportunity or demand. The work of Porter is located firmly in the positioning school of strategy, with its roots in economics. There are, however, a number of different schools derived from a range of academic genres that have contributed to strategic management literature.

In a seminal article on strategy Mintzberg and Lampel (1999) describe the evolution of the field of strategy in terms of ten 'schools' summarised in Table 3-1. The authors then contend that rather than representing different processes or different approaches to strategic management, the schools could be actually viewed as different parts or stages of the strategy formation process, as illustrated in Table 3-1 below.

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Table 3-1: Ten Schools of Strategic Management

School	Process	Category	Base Discipline
1. Design (60s-70's) e.g. Selznick, Andrews	Conception: senior management formulates clear, simple and unique strategies everyone can implement.	Prescriptive	None
2. Planning (60s- 80s) e.g. Ansoff	Formal – distinct steps, with checklists and tools like objectives and operating plans for staff planners.	Prescriptive	Urban planning, systems theory
3. Positioning (80s +) e.g. Porter, Boston Consulting Group	Analytical –strategy reduces to positions based on formalised analysis of industry situations. Planners become analysts.	Prescriptive	Economics, Industrial Organisation and Military History
4. Entrepreneurial (80s+) e.g. Shumpeter, Cole	Visionary – mysteries of intuition focused on chief executive. Shift from precise plans to vague visions and broad perspectives.	Descriptive/ Prescriptive	None
5. Cognitive (80s+)	Mental –information processing, knowledge mapping and concept attainment	Descriptive (Towards interpretive and constructivist view of strategy process)	Psychology
6. Learning e.g. Weick, Mintsberg (70s, 80s +)	Emergent- strategies are emergent, strategists can be found throughout the organisation, strategy formulation and implementation intertwine.	Descriptive(challenging prescriptive	Peripheral links with learning theory in education and psychology
7. Power	Negotiation – political power (bargaining, confrontation internally) and external power as in a joint venture or network relationships.	Descriptive	Political Science
8. Cultural (70s, 80s+)	Social- strategy formation as a social process rooted in culture.	Descriptive	Anthropology

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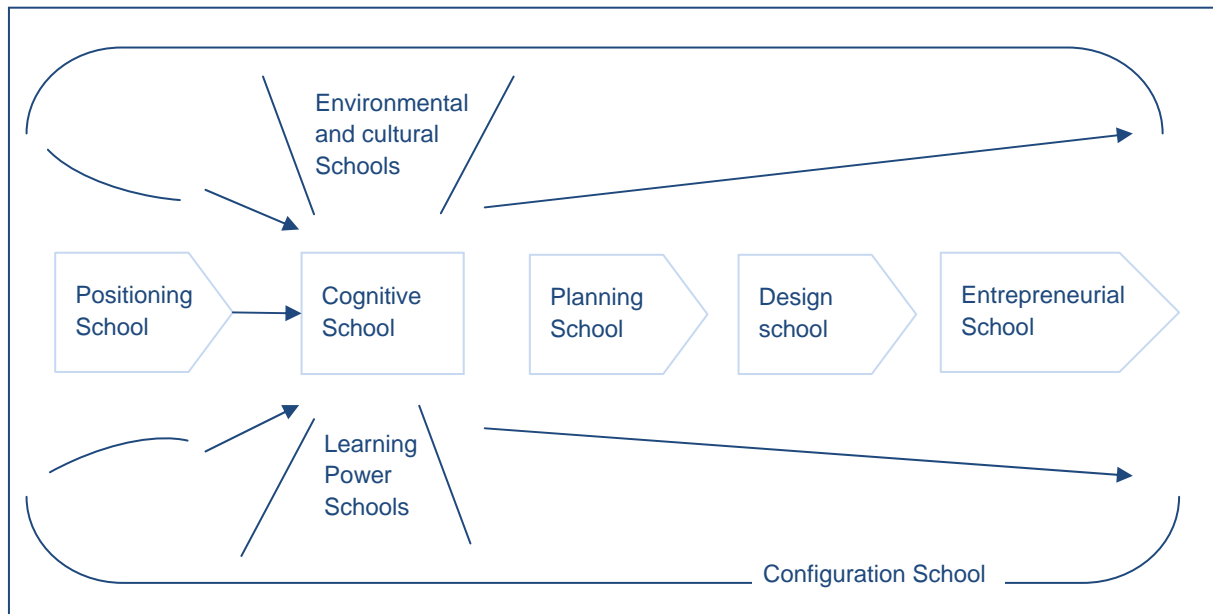
School	Process	Category	Base Discipline
9. Environmental	Reactive- impact of demands of the environment such as contingency theory.	Descriptive	Biology
10. Configuration	Transformation- more extensive and integrative. Organisations as configurations with coherent clusters of characteristics, moving (transforming) from one state to another.	Descriptive and Prescriptive	History

Source: Adapted from Mintzberg and Lampel (1999)

According to that contention, the cognitive school reflects the mind of the strategist at the centre of the process; the positioning school looks behind at established data; while the planning, design and entrepreneurial schools look ahead with different scope and specificity. The cultural and environmental school influence from above, while lurking below are power and learning schools with hidden details. The configuration school looks at, or all around, the process as opposed to inside the process (Mintzberg and Lampel, 1999). In an earlier discussion, Mintzberg and Lampel (1990) suggest that “the evolution of strategic management obeys different principles because it is driven by ideas and practices that originate from qualitatively different sources” such as collaboration or competition. This holds true when considering the role of strategy in the not-for-profit sector. While the purpose of strategy in the private sector is usually maximising profit to shareholders, there are more challenges in understanding strategy making in not-for-profit sectors, which operate in a ‘no-

man's land' between market and state, with perceived gaps in accountability as highlighted in Chapter 2.

Figure 3-2: Strategy Formation as a Single Process

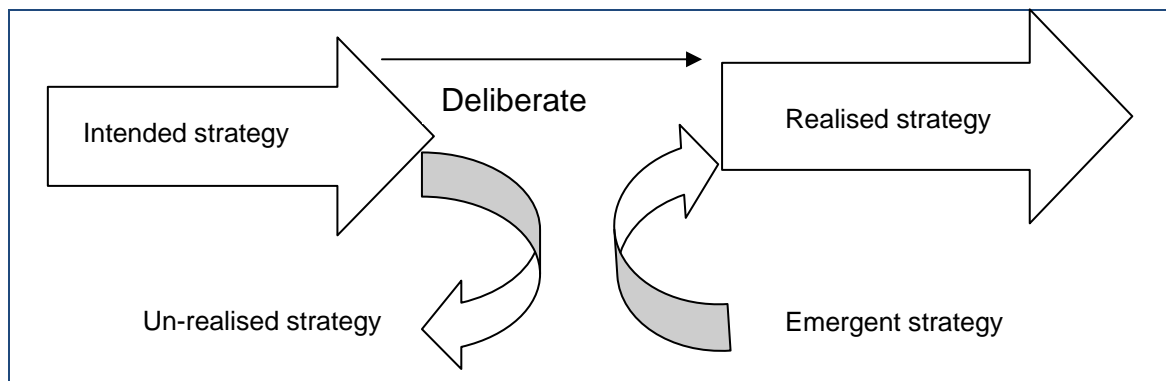


Source: Adapted from Mintzberg and Lampel, 1999

Where organisations are dependent on funds from sponsors or grants, there can be a risk of becoming more concerned with resource efficiency than service effectiveness. Since multiple sources of funding exist, linked to different objectives and expectations of different funding bodies such as government and banks, there can be further external impacts on strategy (Johnson and Scholes, 2002). In the social housing sector, there are various regulatory and financial demands placed on the organisation, and a myriad of external and internal stakeholders with different needs and aspirations, ranging from residents, to local authorities to independent board members. This suggests that a range of complicated factors influence the strategy making process.

For the purposes of this research project a decision was made early on to adopt a processual theoretical assumption regarding strategic management as reflected in Mintzberg and Lampel's (1999) theory above and echoed by Mintzberg and Waters (1985) frequently cited description of strategy as a process from 'intended' to 'realised' (See Figure 3-3)

Figure 3-3: Intended-Realised Strategy



Source: Mintzberg and Waters (1985)

While the positioning and planning schools of strategic management have a more prescriptive and arguably positivist denomination, this Intended-Realised framework belongs to more descriptive genre of strategic management in the learning school and thus contribute to the validity of a qualitative case study. Practically too, although this framework is not on the critical forefront of current academic thinking, being a well-established and cited model it has credibility as a theoretical assumption, and provides the relevant vocabulary with which to engage with the research enquiry regarding the changing CI strategy at HAX.

Finally on a philosophical note, in his comprehensive text on organisational culture Brown (1995) contends that overall strategy can be viewed as more than a plan or system of management. As a value-laden process, strategy can itself be regarded as cultural artefact or symbol, providing a focus for organisation and individual self-understanding as well as a means for comprehending social phenomena. This would seem an appropriate point at which to introduce some key definitions and theories of organisational culture with particular relevance for this case study project.

3.3. Organisational Culture

The concept of culture has roots in the study of ethnic and national differences in disciplines such as anthropology and sociology. According to Wilson (2001, p. 363)

“Organisational culture is multi-faceted and complicated, encompassing a variety of forms, and is determined by myriad influencing factors.”

Regarded today as one of the newer perspectives in organisation theory, Brown (1995) suggests that organisational culture is both a departure from, and an elaboration of, contemporary organisational behaviour studies. While it is still concerned with the formal and rational aspects of organisations, it also develops on established theory relating to group dynamics, power and politics. As it became incorporated in management research, organisational culture was

first considered as an internal element of the organisation i.e. something the 'organisation had' which could be used as a managerial tool to affect performance (Wilson, 2001). From this conception of culture as a formal and objective entity, the understanding of culture has evolved to encompass socially constructed metaphors, where organisations are viewed as forums with socially constructed meanings, expressed through social interaction (Shwartz and Davis, 1981; Tunstell, 1983; Schein 1991). Thus culture has shifted theoretically from a rational entity to be managed, to a more abstract phenomenon to be understood.

Four schools of theory have contributed to the study of organisational culture and these are summarised in Table 3-2 below.

Table 3-2: Organisational Culture and Schools of Influence

1. Human Relations (50's and 60's)	Theories on motivation and group dynamics, beliefs and values
2. Modern Structural Theory (60's)	Organisations as rational, goal-oriented and mechanistic. Authority and hierarchy
3. Systems Theory: (40s - 60s)	Organisations as interdependent systems linked by inputs, outputs and feedback loops. (Katz and Kahn, 1966) Influence on cultural theory today through analysis of organisation in its environment/ context.
4. Power and Politics (late 70s)	Organisations composed of groups/ coalitions/ subcultures. Organisations act irrationally, objectives emerge through negotiation and influence (Pfeffer, 1981)

Source: Adapted from Brown, 1995

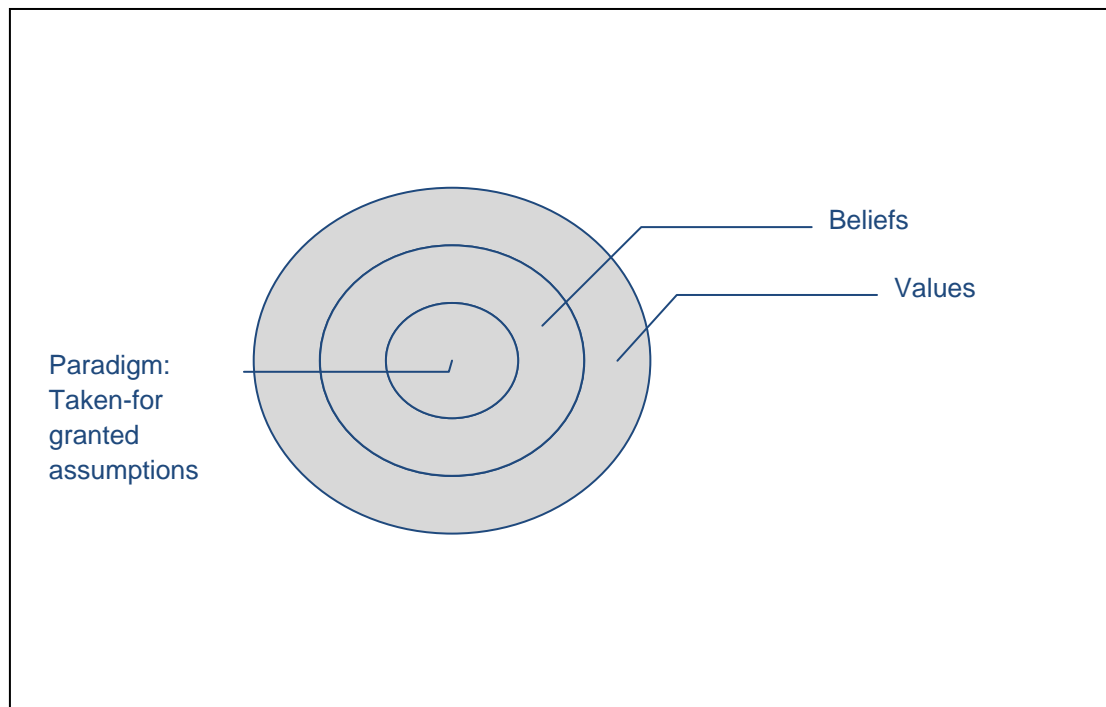
Definitions of organisational culture abound from the generalised to those specific to a root discipline. Nevertheless, there are some definitions that are cited consistently in the literature over the last 60 years:

Table 3-3: Definitions of Organisational Culture

<p><i>"...customary and traditional way of thinking and doing things.." (Jacques, 1952, p.251)</i></p>
<p><i>"Pattern of beliefs and expectations shared by the organisations members. These beliefs and expectations produce norms that powerfully shape the behaviour of individuals and groups in the organisation." (Shwartz and Davis, 1981, p. 33)</i></p>
<p><i>"Corporate culture may be described as a general constellation of beliefs, mores, customs, value systems, behavioural norms, and ways of doing business that are unique to each organisation, that set a pattern for corporate activities and actions." (Tunstall, 1983, p.15)</i></p>
<p><i>"Culture is 'how things are done around here'. It is typical of the organisation, the habits, the prevailing attitudes, the grow-up pattern of accepted and expected behaviour." (Drennan, 1992, p.3)</i></p>

Schein (1991) characterises organisational culture as having 3 layers: values, beliefs and taken-for-granted assumptions or organisational paradigms (See Figure 3-4). Values are seen as the most superficial layer, often encapsulated in mission statements, objectives and strategies/strategic intent. Beliefs are less vague than values, but still identifiable and easily communicated. At the heart of an organisation's culture are taken for granted assumptions which are less easily explained and are reinforced by a number of elements illustrated in the cultural web (Johnson, 1992 – see Figure 3-5).

Figure 3-4: Layers of Organisational Culture

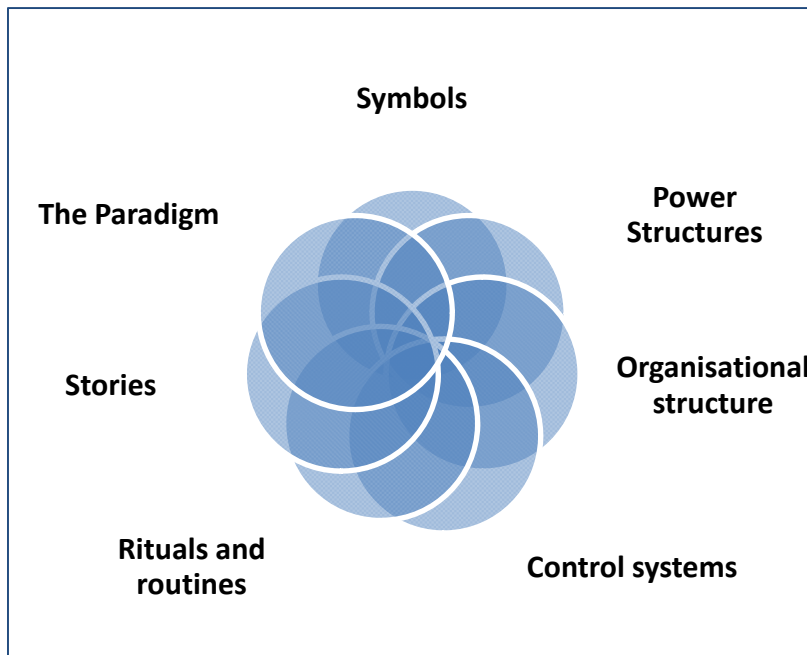


Source: Schein, 1991

The different aspects of the cultural web capture the essence of inherent assumptions in the organisation. The routines in an organisation refer to 'the way things are done', and behaviours of people within the organisation, while

rituals are the events or activities that reinforce routines. The stories told by members of an organisation fix the culture in the organisation's history, affirm certain types of behaviour, and highlight successes and failures.

Figure 3-5: The Cultural Web



Source: Johnson, 1992

Symbols such as job titles, language or logos can represent the character of an organisation while power structures in the organisation lead to the beliefs and assumptions of dominant groups being adopted. Control and measurement systems, as well as the organisational structure highlight key foci and important relationships in the organisation (Johnson and Scholes, 2002).

These theories or characterisations of organisational culture again provide the necessary terminology by which to explore and map the organisational culture of the case study organisation, which through its operating companies and

subsidiaries brings together different HAs all over England with varied heritage and sub-cultures.

Moving on to sub-cultures within an organisation, Gregory (1983, p. 359) contends that

“.....many organisations are most accurately viewed as multi-cultural. Sub-groups within different occupational, divisional, ethnic, or, other cultures approach organisational interactions with their own meanings, and senses of priorities....”

In a paper advocating the adoption of ‘native view’ paradigms in the study of organisational culture Gregory (1983) critically considers earlier research on organisational culture in industrial contexts (Peters and Waterman, 1982; Deal and Kennedy, 1982 among others). Illustrating this ‘native view’ perspective, rooted in anthropological interpretations of organisational culture, in an empirical investigation of ‘Silicon Valley’ professionals, the author proposes that:

“Societies, and many organisations, can more correctly be viewed in terms of multiple, cross-cutting cultural contexts changing through time, rather than as stable, bounded, homogenous cultures.” Gregory (1983, p. 365)

Martin and Meyerson’s (1998) widely adopted framework cites three perspectives on organisational culture and sub-cultures: the integration, differentiation and the fragmentation perspectives respectively. An integration

perspective is indicative of a consensus or consistent culture, with values and formal practices aligned to beliefs, attitudes and norms. Inconsistencies, a lack of shared commitment or variations in sub-cultures reflect a weak culture according to this view. The differentiation perspective acknowledges the specific mix of sub-cultures as contributing to the uniqueness of an organisational culture. The final perspective of fragmentation proposes ambiguous rather than shared cultural or sub-cultural values or norms, with transient variations of consensus and disagreement occurring over specific issues or events. On the basis of primary case study research, Martin and Meyerson (1998) also propose that organisational culture in practice includes aspects of all three perspective types. In the context of this case, the differentiation and fragmentation perspectives are most relevant in exploring the multiple sub-cultures of an organisation that shift as the organisation goes through strategic changes, which echoes Gregory's (1983) depiction of the nature of organisational sub-cultures.

Hofstede's (1980) commonly cited text on *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work Related Values*, may initially not seem the most relevant to this in-depth case study of one housing association. However extending (or reducing) the paradigm of cultural variances between organisations in different countries to the difference in cultures across the management strata and geographical spread of HAX's operating companies could make Hofstede's work applicable on a different scale. Building on earlier work, subsequent research based on surveys of IBM employees around the

world (Hofstede, 1991) provided the evidence for identifying five dimensions along which national cultures differ i.e. Power distance; Individualism/collectivism; Masculinity/femininity; Uncertainty avoidance, and Confucian dynamism. Again, employing these national characteristics in an intra-organisational context provides the cultural adjectives to uncover and describe cultural variation or organisational sub-cultures within HAX. For example, low power distance is symptomatic of lower inequalities in power, greater decentralisation, and a less hierarchical structure manifest with fewer status symbols. High power distance countries (hence organisations or companies) are more centralised with power concentrated at the top of management structures, and clearer boundaries expressed with salaries and status symbols. Individualistic societies have a higher degree of individual independence, with a focus on skills and rules while cohesive, loyal groups are more indicative of collective societies. The masculinity/ femininity dimension indicates the extent to which social gender roles are clearly separated while uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree to which people feel threatened by unknown or uncertain conditions. Finally, confucian dynamism indicates how long or short-termist countries are in terms of a national outlook, or attitude, epitomised by the search for 'truth' or 'virtue'. Hofstede (1991) describes short-termism in an organisational context as being more closely related to Western values concerned with social and status responsibilities, respecting traditions, conspicuous consumption and quick results. This is contrasted with the

Confucian or long-term focus which is less concerned with status obligations while emphasising perseverance and adapting traditions to a modern context.

While not all these dimensions may be applicable to understanding the sub-cultures of a single organisation, they indicate some possibilities for mapping aspects of organisational culture.

Finally since strategy and culture are both key concepts in this research enquiry, it is worth noting that there are also a number of well-cited theories linking strategy and culture (Miles and Snow, 1978; Shwartz and Davis, 1981). Miles and Snow's (1978) typology identifies 3 types of organisational culture or patterns: the Defender, Prospector and Analyser. The centralised defender organisation adopts a strategy of cost efficiency in a stable environment, emphasising efficiency to secure the market. The decentralised or flexible prospector operates a growth strategy to seek new opportunities in a dynamic environment. Finally the analyser type organisation uses a mixed or loose-tight structure to both expand and protect in order to achieve steady growth in a moderately dynamic environment.¹³

Shwartz and Davis (1981) on the other hand illustrate the links between strategy and culture through a cultural risk framework, where levels of culture compatibility are plotted against importance to strategy to create high, medium and low acceptability of risk. While both these frameworks can be broadly

¹³ Czischke and Gruis (2007) and Gruis (2008) adapt the Miles and Snow (1978) model to conceptualise types of social housing providers in the defender and prospector dimensions, diversifying into market segments or the public sector respectively.

applied to explore the cultural position of an organisation in relation to both its strategic positioning and as a management tool to identify risks to the effectiveness of strategy through cultural incompatibility, they have not been selected to uncover the multi-layered sub-cultures within an organisation as per the aims of this case study,

As the introduction to this chapter explained, the grounded approach of this PhD project using scoping fieldwork to uncover not only key issues but possible theoretical connections between them, led the researcher to concentrate on the links between sub-cultures and driving institutional logics as related to the changing directions of CI at HAX. Thus the overlap between organisational culture and institutional logics can be regarded as the main theoretical contribution of this study. For this reason (and reiterating the similar argument at the end of section 3.2) the theories on organisational culture cited in this section of the discussion have been highlighted in that they provide theoretical assumptions by which to frame and refine the concept of organisational culture in the context of this case study. Furthermore, they provide the theoretical bases to explore the existence of multiple sub-cultures within a single organisation and the tools to describing these sub-cultures in a coherent and legitimate way. In a sense, through incorporating theoretical assumptions on key concepts, the researcher would hope to achieve a theoretical validity on which to build arguments on institutional logics in the context of this project. The following section provides a background to, and initiates, some of those arguments.

3.4. Institutional Theory and Logics

3.4.1. Institutions

Following a sector analysis and preliminary fieldwork to refine an initial research topic in the first year of the PhD (see introduction to this chapter) the research enquiry became focused on the changing strategic management of CI and the multiple organisational sub-cultures affecting or affected by those changes. Early theoretical assumptions were set which could be defined and help structure the research methodology and design. Through this process institutional logics was critically linked to the organisational sub-cultures that were being uncovered through the multi-layered empirical exploration of changing CI strategy. As the empirical analysis (see chapters 5 to 9) will reveal, links between emerging and evolving sub-cultures and the competing logics of efficiency and accountability (Mullins 2006), briefly described in the context analysis of Chapter 1, quickly became increasingly apparent. The adoption of institutional theory and particularly the concept of organisational logics as pertaining to the social housing sector context (Mullins, 2006) became an appropriate choice to apply to this case study of a large housing association.

Before describing in further detail how institutional logics is incorporated as part of a hopefully coherent theoretical framework, a review of key definitions and seminal texts on institutional theory and logics is necessary to contextualise the ensuing discussion.

In his significant work on institutions and organisations, Scott (2001) considers the origin and various strands that make up modern institutional theory, outlining definitions and identifying three distinct analytical components of institutions. The multiplicity of definitions, which Scott (2001, p.49) aptly refers to as an 'omnibus conception' of institutions include the following:

"Institutions are social structures that have attained a high degree of resilience.....Institutions are composed of cultured-cognitive, normative, and regulative elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life.....institutions are multi-faceted, durable social structures, made up of symbolic elements, social activities and material resources."

The links between intangible aspects of organisational culture and the 'symbolic elements' of institutions are immediately apparent. However on initial appraisal these broad, sweeping definitions could prove problematic when attempting to define the parameters or borders of an institution for the purposes of a research project. In the case of this PhD case study, would these characterisations of institution be applicable to the UK's third sector, the housing sector or the housing association sector? Within the social housing sector the top echelons of large HAs (or indeed the handful of mega-associations) display a distinct typology of organisational qualities driven by certain economic, political and cultural change factors (Mullins and Sacranie, 2009). On the other hand, could the case study organisation itself, with its multiple subsidiaries and operating companies, be considered an institutional entity? On further consideration, the

definitional ambiguity of institutions presented the researcher with more of a critical opportunity than a limitation in a grounded study where empirical results are used to reinforce and develop theoretical perspectives. Furthermore the various scales at which institutions could be conceived tied in thematically with the recurring motif of this research study i.e. the multi-layered approach.

Moving beyond the structure of institutions to their inherent qualities, Scott (2001) contends that although the functions of institutions are to provide stability and order, they themselves are subject to incremental and revolutionary change, and that institutions are thereby both a state and a process. Linking this to the other two theoretical components of this study, the idea of occupying a state or position that can be qualitatively described ties in with the sub-cultures at HAX (which do shift and evolve) while the development of a CI strategy as a process has already been emphasised as one of the significant theoretical assumptions of the empirical investigation.

Links between culture and institutionalism are an underlying thread in intuitionist literature (Hofman, 1997; Parsons 1990; Scott, 2001) as is evident in Table 3-4 where one of the three, not mutually exclusive, pillars of institutions is the cultural cognitive category (Scott, 2001). While Scott suggests that all three academic schools are applicable in understanding institutions, it is the cultural cognitive pillar where 'shared logics of action' reside that is of particular interest and relevance for this PhD study.

Thornton (2002) draws on Scott's (1995) typology which describes the channels of institutions located in 'carriers' such as cultures (interpretive structures and patterns of meaning), social structures (social networks and role systems), and routines (habitualized behaviours). This framework reinforces the links between institutional theory and organisational culture as manifest in the institutional logics which organisations are subject to.

Table 3-4: Pillars of Institutions

Pillar			
	Regulative	Normative	Cultural-cognitive
Basis of compliance	Expedience	Social Obligation	Taken-for-granted Shared understanding
Basis of order	Regulative rules	Binding expectations	Constitutive schemes
Mechanisms	Coercive	Normative	Mimetic
Logic	Instrumentality	Appropriateness	Orthodoxy
Indicators	Rules Laws Sanctions	Certification Accreditation	Common beliefs Shared logics of action
Basis of legitimacy	Legally sanctioned	Morally governed	Comprehensible Recognisable

Pillar			
	Regulative	Normative	Cultural-cognitive
			Culturally supported

Source: Adapted from Scott, 2001, p 52

3.4.2. Institutional logics

A convincing rationale for the exploration of institutional logics in organisational contexts is provided by Greenwood et al (2010, p.251):

“Organizational forms and managerial practices are manifestations of, and legitimated by, institutional logics. Thus, to understand how and why organizations exhibit similarity and variation in their use of such forms and practices it is necessary to trace the relationship between organizations and the logics that constitute their institutional context.”

(Greenwood et al, 2010, p. 521)

According to Scot (2001, p. 139) ‘Institutional logics refer to the belief systems and related practices that predominate in an organisational field’. Lounsbury (2007, p. 289) reiterates the association between the concept of logics and “broader cultural beliefs and rules that structure cognition and guide decision making in a field.” Scott (1994) also refers to systems of logics within fields that range in terms of ‘content, penetration, linkage and exclusiveness’. Where content relates to specific belief systems as perceived by ‘field members’, penetration is how deep or to what extent these logics become entrenched. The

linkage dimension relates to how logics are linked to other belief systems horizontally. Finally exclusiveness refers to what extent an institutional logic is dominant in its organisational field so that while some fields display somewhat consistent belief systems, other fields are typified by either secondary logics or 'multiple conflicting belief systems.' This view reinforces the earlier work by Friedland and Alford (1991) who strongly support the notion of multiple logics existing in all organisational fields, and specifically logics entrenched in a higher order of society which are hierarchical in form. Thornton (2002, p. 83) builds on this framework of 'nested levels' (such as individuals, organisations and society) by identifying the "main institutional sectors of society- the family, the religions, the professions, the state, the corporation, and the market" which "provide a distinct set of often conflicting or complementary logics that form the basis of institutional conflict and conformity." According to Thornton (2002, 2004) the presence of two logics within a field reflects a process of change whereby one logic substitutes the other. Conflicting logics suggest a weakening connection between an organisation and its field as it becomes 'less legitimate and competitive' bearing in mind though that "the legitimacy and competitiveness of an organization are relative concepts" (Thornton, 2002, p. 98). Where fields become fragmented with competing logics, new organisational forms become apparent (Scott, 2001) since tensions between institutional logics create pressures for organizational change (Thornton, 2002).

Despite the academic support behind Friedland and Alford's (1991) position on multiple logics (Scott, 2001; Thornton; 2002, 2004) , there has not been a great

deal of work on understanding how and why organisations react to multiple logics (Greenwood et al, 2010). A reason for this according to Lounsbury (2007) is that most recent studies seem preoccupied with organisational fields and industries which are ordered by a “dominant logic” which provokes ‘isomorphic’ (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) rather than heterogeneous responses. Despite this critique there are still a number of academic sources which consider the effects of institutional logics on organisational change in the context of different industries (Scott 2001; Thornton 2002 and 2004; Mullins 2006; Lounsbury 2007).

In a recent paper entitled “The multiplicity of institutional logics and the heterogeneity of organisational responses” Greenwood et al (2010) show how organisations in a market environment are affected by different non-institutional logics, namely regional state and family logics which together create a complex institutional context. Their study finds that regional logics are more influential when the activities of (Spanish) organisations- and particularly large ones- are focused in regions where local government is strong and supports regional distinctiveness. Family logics on the other hand have a greater impact in smaller companies where they appear in particular to affect the decision to downsize. The authors consider their findings as contributing to the growing recognition of community influences in market dominated contexts. Interestingly, preliminary findings of this PhD case study of an English housing association seem to prove the opposite. Of course one has to consider the different political conditions in the UK at the time of, and preceding the PhD

case study project, where policies of successive governments such as the 'de-municipalisation' of social housing (Mullins, 2006), the co-location of centralised regulatory and funding bodies, and schemes such as Investment Partnering which stimulated merger activity and drove the growth of mega HAs and consequently the centralisation of services to meet regulatory demands and leverage efficiencies. However the underlying theme of the study by Greenwood et al (2010) is the acknowledgement of an 'institutional complexity' which is particularly relevant in context of this PhD case study.

Applying the principle of multiple competing logics in yet another industry, Lounsbury (2007) investigates how trustee and performance logics respectively affected the development of mutual fund activity in Boston and New York. Using a historical context analysis as well as an empirical investigation, Lounsbury considers the shift in mutual fund contracting in the US from the Boston-based, small investment firms of a 'trustee organisational form' in the early 20th century to 'growth fund movement' of speculative investments initiated in New York in the 1950s characterised by a 'performance' logic. The former logic is characterised as a conservative 'ad hoc, craft-based vocation, learned through apprenticeship and seeded in small investment firms, such as mutual fund organizations that enabled small investors to access broadly diversified portfolios of stocks. The more liberal 'upstart New York funds' gained strength through a speculative approach to investment with large investment firms. The author contends that the diffusion of new practice is shaped by these competing

logics or “multiple forms or modes of reality that generate variation in organizational adoption behaviour and practice.” (Lounsbury, 2007, p. 302)

In her longitudinal study of the higher education publishing industry from the late 50's to the 90's, Thornton(1999; 2002) considers the change of institutional logics from an editorial focus to a market orientation. Employing a detailed historical analysis with extensive fieldwork to investigate the effects of editorial and market logics particularly on executive power and succession in the mentioned industry, her key findings indicate a shift in logics from editorial to market, the former focused on relationships between the author and editor as well as on internal growth while the latter centred on resource composition and acquisition growth. Accordingly, Thornton argues that with a stronger editorial logic, it is the organisation's size and structure that determines executive succession while an overriding market logic sees product and corporate markets being the key influence on executive succession.

Building on Thornton's (1999; 2002; 2004) work on competing institutional logics, Mullins (2006a) applies these arguments to the UK's social housing sector where “a prolonged process of institutional adaptation has brought fundamental changes in patterns of accountability” (2006, p. 21). Mullins tracks the growth trajectory of the social housing sector in the UK since the early 1980's to their present- day position as the largest provider of social housing nationally with strengthened accountabilities to government and private lenders, weakened accountabilities to local authorities and changed nature of accountabilities to communities and residents. Considering key organisational

change drivers and the emerging dynamics of the sector, he identifies the tension between pressures for HAs to be both locally accountable, and efficient in the management and delivery of their social rental and development of social housing: “Public policy drivers of efficient procurement and community engagement are in tension, and these tensions are played out in the dominant logics in the field and within individual organisations.”(Mullins, 2006, p. 21)

These often rival demands, which are peculiar to the third sector of social housing, and affected by political and regulatory factors, economic drivers, as well cultural shifts have been described in detail in Chapter 2 of this thesis, and characterised and mapped by the divergent demands on HAS highlighted in the same chapter. What is of particular relevance in this chapter is Mullins’ (2006) analysis of how these external demands are institutionally entrenched, and manifest in competing organisational logics. The influence of these logics of efficiency and accountability on organisational change are analysed in a series of case studies of HAs, and the empirical evidence leads Mullins to considering the future direction of the UK’s social housing sector as a number of different possibilities involving the interplay of these logics, so that :

“...four main possibilities are raised by this analysis. First, that the co-existence of two logics implies a process of transition from one to the other. Second that it is possible for the tension between the two logics to be managed in the long term. Third, that there will be an increasing separation between followers of the two logics into separate fields.

Finally, the logics could be transformed as a result of institutional wider changes.” (Mullins, 2006, p.19)

Mullins (2006a) concludes that the most likely outcome would be a widening of the existing chasm between large HAs and smaller ones, with the accountability logic in these large HAs being overtaken by efficiency drives. He also makes reference to the possibility that as the (social housing) field fragments and new players enter the market, new logics could also develop (Scott, 2001). While Mullins’ paper is framed at a sector level using a number of case studies to highlight the logics identified in a systematic review of the sector’s history, the approach taken in framing the findings as the current interplay between competing logics and possible future directions of the is one that could be adopted to frame the empirical findings of this PhD, with the researcher identifying the current position of HAX with regard to its CI strategy and possible future strategic management options as institutional logics overlaid with organisational sub-cultures.

Mullins (2006, p.13) provides an encouraging rationale for institutional logics as an informative and appropriate framework in understanding how HAs, with a specific set of values and beliefs, respond and adapt to a set of multiple conflicting change drivers:

“Logics provide a means for organisations to simplify this complexity, incorporating both beliefs and behaviours. Logics also connect organisations to the institutional fields in which they operate and it is

useful to identify the ways in which beliefs and practices are shared and reproduced by exchanges.”

Apart from the relevant links between organizational culture and institutional logics (Scott, 2001) for this PhD study, a common underlying factor in all the references on institutional logics cited in this literature review, regardless of the particular sector or industry in which the research is located, is the critical importance of historical context (Greenwood et al, 2010; Scott, 2002; Thornton, 1999; Friedman and Alford, 1999; Mullins, 2006; Lounsbury, 2007) in the development of logics. This serves to reinforce the methodological and theoretical aspects that are pertinent to this PhD project, with its core enquiry derived from, and refined through, a detailed sector analysis to identify the key research themes of the multi-layered case study.

Finally returning to Friedland and Alford's (1991) earlier description of logics as consisting of both of material practices and symbolic constructions, this seems to provide an ideal link between CI strategy at HAX as a 'material practices' and the multi-layered exploration of its organisational sub-cultures as 'symbolic constructions.' How the different elements of this theoretical framework are linked together is detailed in the following section of this chapter.

3.5. A Layered Theoretical Approach

One of the challenges in writing up this thesis was trying to reflect the process of the research project and the key decisions made along the way, with a logical structure of chapters and sections which made sense thematically and sequentially. In a way this challenge reflected the tensions inherent to a partly-deductive, partly inductive research project. Reflecting on the theoretical positioning and the development of a theoretical framework before an explanation of the research findings is indicative of this challenge.

Perhaps the best attempt to describe this process succinctly without pre-empting the following empirical analyses or the theoretical dénouement of the concluding chapters, is to briefly highlight some simplified early empirical findings from the researcher's initial engagement with HAX.

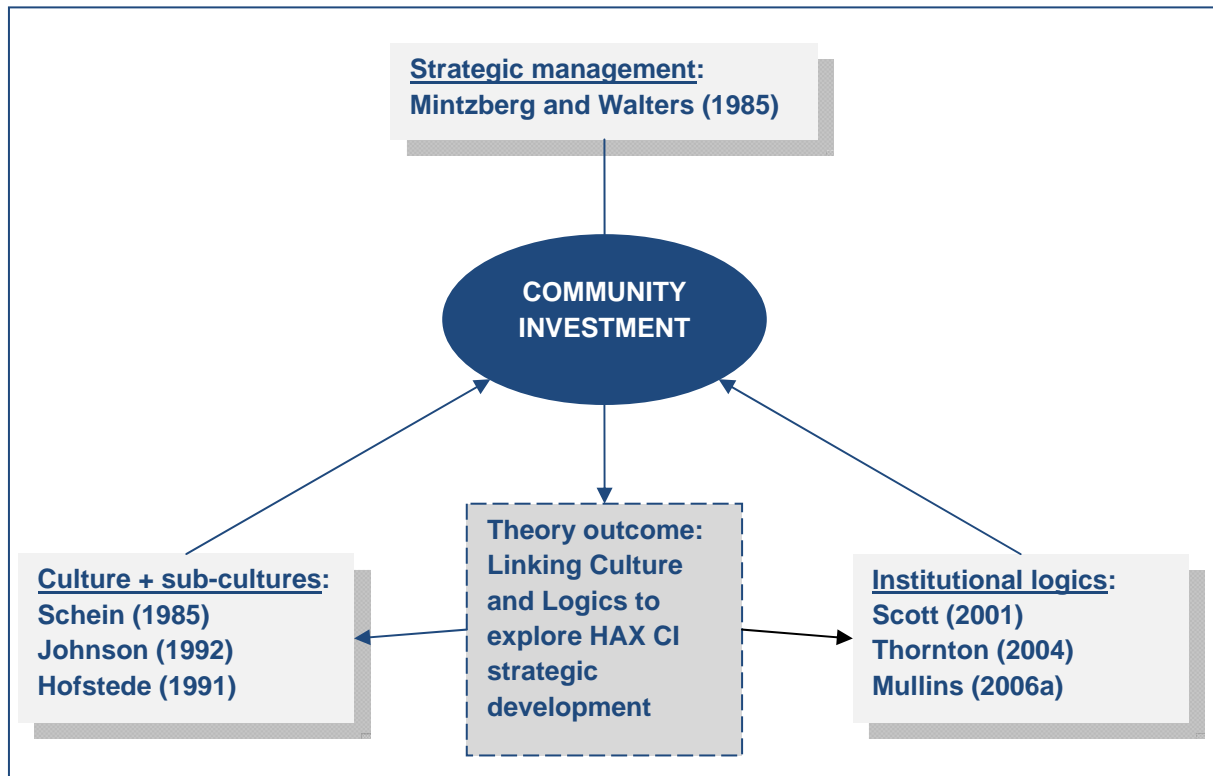
While considering issues related to the strategic direction of CI at this dynamic organisation and the impact of sub-cultures as pre-determined themes, the preliminary stages of fieldwork revealed that there was a clearly pronounced tension between a more corporate, financially-driven and centralist outlook which dominated senior executive decision-making and a more locally-responsive, community-oriented, regional culture that was being subsumed by the former. These link broadly with Mullins' (2006) competing logics of efficiency and accountability, and both sets of sub-cultures seemed to be related to a number of historical and current external drivers which provoked some critical questions:

- Within the multiple layers of the organisation, which dominant culture or 'world view' was translating into realised and emergent strategies?
- Could the institutional forces such as the competing logics of efficiency and local accountability (Mullins, 2006) be linked to culture or sub-cultures within the organisation?
- How could the multi-layered view of an organisation over an 18 month to 2 year period be reflected not only methodologically but also theoretically in the exploration of organisational sub-cultures?
- What would the connection be between strategy, culture and institutional logics – could institutional logics tie together the cultural aspect of the study, as related to the organisation's specific sub-cultures and their influence on strategy, with the strategic direction of community investment, as related to an organisation located in a specific historical, political and economic context?

In attempting to define a theoretical framework, Figures 3-6 and 3-7 reflect these questions rather than attempting to answer them. They indicate the main theoretical positions and the links between them, and constitute a critical point of reference for the research methodology for this project and the detailed design of the empirical fieldwork plan as will be outlined in the next chapter. Furthermore, as this project seeks to contribute to the development of theory, by building on Mullins (2006a) application of existing institutional theory to the social housing sector, and linking to other relevant theoretical strands in relation to organisational cultures and strategic positioning the themes of competing

logics were crucial as thematic references in the data analysis stages of the study.

Figure 3-6: Linking Theories

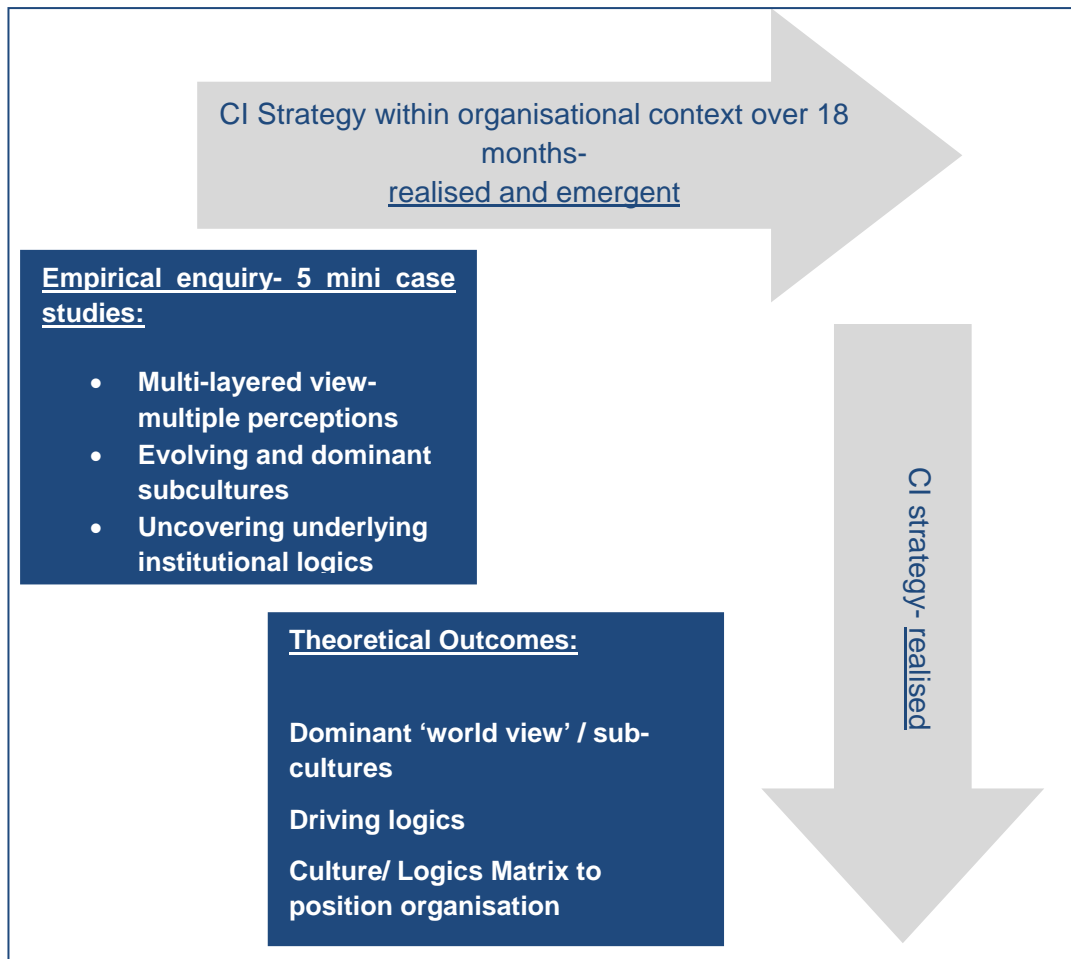


Source: The Author (2009)

An important caveat to reading these figures is that while the connecting arrows are depicted as one-directional, they do not intend to imply a causal relationship between the phenomena at hand. The researcher's perception, based on both the empirical evidence and the researcher's interpretivist point of view, is that institutional logics influence sub-cultures while dominant sub-cultures reinforce driving logics. Depicting the same academic reference points in a different format, Table 3-5 outlines the critical components of the theoretical framework

as related to the original research objectives defined in the introduction of this thesis.

Figure 3-7: A Theoretical Framework



Source: The Author (2009)

Table 3-5: Research Objectives and their Theoretical Reference Points

Research Objectives	Theoretical Reference Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore emergent and realised strategy and influences through the example of key strategic and operational changes in CI over the duration of the research project. 	Mintzberg and Waters (1985) for strategy as a process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track the changes and critical incidents in the development of the organisation's CI strategy over 2 years as part of overall changes at the organisation. 	<p>Mintzberg and Waters (1985) for strategy as a process.</p> <p>Shein (1985), Johnson(1992), Hofstede (1991) for different views of the same events.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify sub-cultures i.e. shared values and multiple identities/ visions of the same organisation as well as the regional or centralised bias of these sub-cultures 	Schein (1985), Johnson(1992), Hofstede (1991) for understanding and describing organisational culture and sub-cultures- values, identity etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reveal participants' perceptions on the core purpose and identity of the organisation, and changes in strategy and culture. 	<p>Shein (1985), Johnson(1992), Hofstede (1991) for understanding and describing organisational culture and sub-cultures- values, identity etc.</p> <p>Mintzberg and Waters (1985) for strategy as a process.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncover the range of views for why and how CI is done/ should be done and relate to organisational culture and perceptions of the identity of the organisation. 	<p>Shein (1985), Johnson(1992), Hofstede (1991) for understanding and describing organisational culture and sub-cultures.</p> <p>Mullins (2006a), Thornton (2004) and Scott (2001) for identifying influential institutional logics.</p>

Research Objectives	Theoretical Reference Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link each mini-case study to a driving institutional logic 	Mullins (2006a) competing logics of efficiency and accountability as key themes to be further dissected and developed in conjunction with theory on sub-cultures.

(Source: The Author, 2009)

An overarching theme of this research project is the multi-layered view of a large HA. With this in mind, the researcher has attempted to layer methodology with theory by linking an exploration of mini case studies and organisational sub-cultures with external and institutional logics. Apart from grounding the empirical investigation in a relevant theoretical context, the conceptual framework that was developed needed to be flexible enough to be incorporated into the research cycle at different stages, so that theory influenced fieldwork which influenced theory development.

The principal rationale behind the choice of theories were to link the key concepts of strategy, culture and community investment in a framework that supported the multi-layered emic study of a large organisation. This framework should acknowledge co-existent realities as influenced by a particular set of internal and external change drivers i.e. institutional logics. In terms of an original contribution, this research would build on the existing application of institutional logics theory to the social housing sector (Mullins 2006) by developing a framework that overlaps aspects of organisational culture and institutional theory. The methodological approach adopted and research design devised for this purpose is the subject of discussion in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4:

METHODOLOGY & METHODS

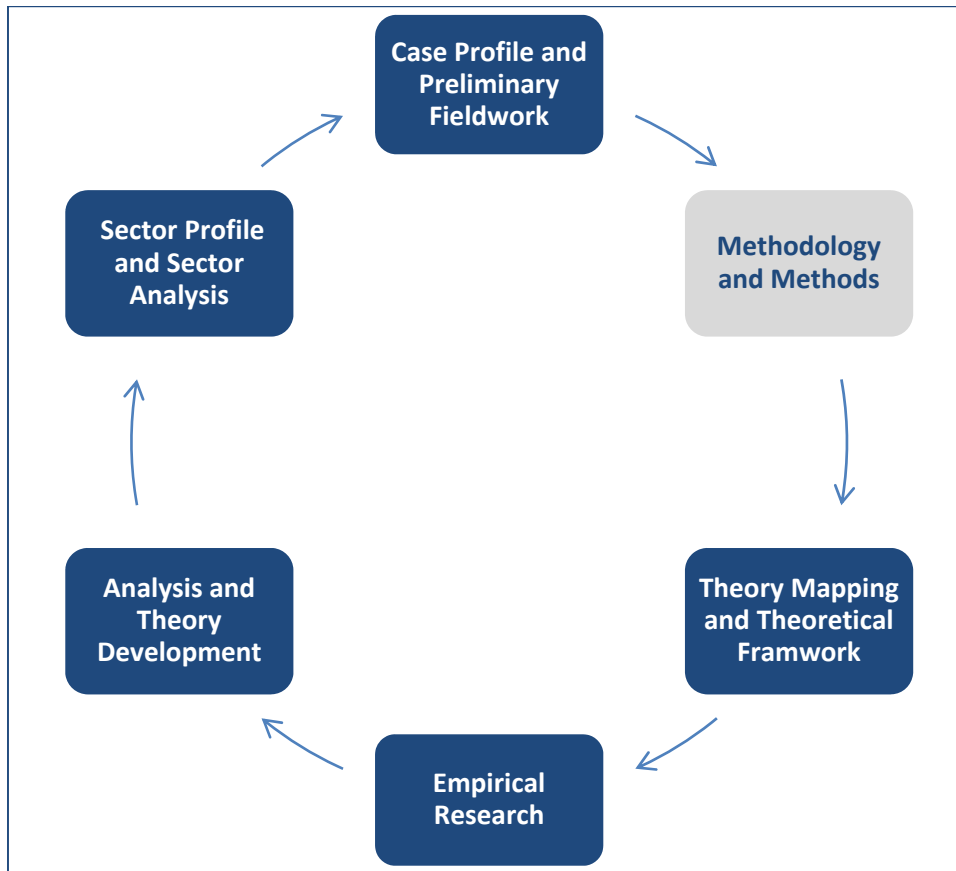
4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodological approach adopted for this project and outline the research methods that were employed to fulfil the aims of the study. The discussion begins by expanding on the philosophical standpoint behind the study in terms of a research ontology and epistemology, and describes the interpretivist approach that underlined the part-inductive, part-deductive research process.

Some of the advantages and pitfalls of case study research are considered and reflected upon, and the multi-layered structure for this project is described. Details are provided on the research logistics including the timetable for primary fieldwork and the number of participants and engagements with them. The discussion moves on to describe the multi-method approach adopted before deliberating on the research validity and reliability of the study and how triangulation is achieved. The relationship between the researcher and the case study organisation is described, with particular consideration given to the research ethics and management which are affected by the collaborative organisational study setting.

In the introduction of this thesis, the iterative development of the project was discussed and illustrated by the diagram of a research cycle. This chapter deals with the methodological issues as highlighted in Figure 4-1 below.

Figure 4-1: Research Cycle: Methodology and Methods



Source: The Author (2010)

In this diagram 'methodology and methods' are located prior to 'theory mapping' but could in fact be positioned at the start of the process because of the importance of leveraging opportunity for extensive primary research at the case study organisation, which was an influential factor on the research design. An initial consideration of how the privileged open access to a leading organisation in the sector could be best leveraged to make an original contribution to research led to the decision, at an early stage in the project, to embark on approximately 14 months of original fieldwork. (This would be subsequent to the preliminary engagement with HAX in the form of scoping fieldwork which began

literally a few weeks into the start of the PhD in October 2007). Because of the number of critical changes that had occurred at HAX as well as the possibility for further restructuring at the organisation, a shorter (perhaps more typical) period of around 3 or 4 months of fieldwork seemed insufficient to capture these significant changes at HAX, and would furthermore be too narrow a snapshot of the evolving organisational culture and subcultures. Real-life practicalities of a partnership research project and expectations from research participants at the housing association meant some indication of the research framework and fieldwork logistics was initially required, such as the research aims, methods and identifying participants or interviewees. This created the impetus to address some methodological questions at an early stage of the research. So from the outset, certain methodological aims and parameters were set and these evolved and were layered with detail as the literature reviews and primary fieldwork ensued.

The research cycle (Figure 4-1) itself reflects an alternate to a more linear research process. A key aspect of the entire research process was the integration of methodological, empirical and theoretical issues, culminating in the multi-layered approach. This approach informed the reflective qualitative methodology, the mini-case study methods and choice of exploring organisational strategy and sub-cultures as part of the theoretical framework. According to Bryman and Burgess (1994) it is often the case that the literature review, theoretical framework and methodological considerations are all intertwined, rather than having a sequential order.

The literature review for this methodology chapter was conducted using seminal research texts, journal articles, library and e-resources. Reading lists from the research methods lecture modules at CURS, Birmingham University proved to be invaluable in developing a methodological rationale for this study.

4.2. A Research Philosophy and Approach

4.2.1. Epistemology and Ontology: Positioning and Viewpoints

An understanding of the philosophical issues underlying research is an essential foundation to a research design. Epistemology “is concerned with the theory of knowledge” and external validity (generalisability), while ontology can be regarded as the ‘image of social reality upon which a theory is based’ (Grix: 2001, p. 26).

Different epistemological positions - such as positivism and interpretivism - can lead to different methodological approaches while different ontological positions - like objectivism and constructivism - can lead to different perceptions of the same social phenomena. According to Grix (2001, p 26):

“Different scholarly traditions embedded in fundamentally different cultural contexts can have diverging views of the world and differing assumptions underpinning their particular approaches to social enquiry.”

An extensive array and volume of literature is available comparing and contrasting epistemological and ontological standpoints. However, the purpose

of this chapter is not to review this extensive literature but to support the research position adopted for this study, the rationale behind its adoption and the subsequent research plan derived from and influenced by this research approach.

The dominant philosophical influences on the research design for this project were an instinctively interpretive viewpoint and a reflexive stance, exploring the relationship between strategy, culture, institutional logics and community investment rather than trying to measure the impact of organisational culture on strategic management in a more positivistic sense of cause and effect.

Interpretivism as an ontological position can be described as distinctly anti-positivistic and has roots in a school of cultural anthropology founded by Franz Boas (1928), and the 'verstehen' sociology of Max Weber. 'Verstehen', from the German word meaning 'understanding', meant researchers putting themselves in the position of those they were studying, to try and understand how they see the world and the purpose of their actions (Weber, 1978). Weber, one of the main influences on the interpretivist tradition, argued for a non-positivist research logic for the social sciences which was fundamentally different from the natural world, where an objective, causal approach was deemed more relevant (Weber, 1978; Bryman, 1989).

Interpretivist research supports the view that cultures can be understood by studying what people think about, their ideas, and the meanings that are important to them. Meaning is derived from the nature of people's participation in social and cultural life (Neyland, 2008). Interpretivist researchers therefore

working within this paradigm analyse the meanings people confer upon their own and others' actions (Bryman, 2004). For this reason interpretivism is seen as having a humanist viewpoint. Schutz (1972) argued that social institutions cannot be separated from the subjective understanding that people have of them. Since people attach meaning to their actions, human societies are essentially subjective. Another concept in the interpretivist ontology associated with Schutz's (1972) work is phenomenology. This approach considers people in their everyday context but argues that social science research should do more than simply interpret the meanings people give to their actions, by showing how people come to construct these meanings for their actions.

An interpretive position complements the multi-layered research design of this project which seeks to capture aspects of organisational culture across the various strata of the case study organisation, acknowledging that "*the world is open to multiple claims as to what is going on*" (Neyland, 2008, p. 42). Using different layers of HAX as empirical sampling points of the organisation reinforces the ontological position that reality can be defined by a multiplicity of perspectives, and that objectivity is relative (Neyland, 2008). Relativism, the idea that truth and facts depend on viewpoint of the observer (Bryman, 1989) is a philosophy that has also been drawn upon when comparing findings across the layers of HAX.

The research cycle (Figure 4-1) epitomises the recurring and reflexive character of the research, which the researcher recorded through a research diary and

fieldwork journal. This again relates to a more interpretive tradition of which reflexivity is a symptom (Cassel and Symon, 1994).

Because of the part-deductive ('testing theory') and part-inductive ('building theory') methodology (Saunders et al, 2000), research questions for this project were justified by contextual, theoretical, empirical and methodological factors, as summarised in Chapter 1, Tables 1-1 to 1-4. Chapters 2 and 3 expanded on some of the key issues at sector level that influenced the research topic for this project, while Chapter 4 discussed the theoretical frameworks developed in the thesis. There were, of course, links too between the methodological approach and the subject matter for this study. The focus on the changing Strategic Management at HAX was referenced in the original CASE proposal for the study¹⁴ and, combined with the analysis of trends in the sector and the conception of the case study organisation rooted in its historical context, reinforced the deductive aspect of this research methodology. At the same time, research findings based on emerging themes in the empirical exploration of changing strategic management at HAX emphasise the part-inductive quality of this research project.

An interpretive research position, exploring the multiple realities and layers of the organisation in a three year collaborative research arrangement with HAX, presented the opportunity to conduct an in-depth study appropriate to explore intangible and sometimes hidden organisational sub-cultures. Therefore from a methodological perspective, the researcher's access to the organisation and its

¹⁴ "The Changing Management, Governance and Accountability of Large, Not-for-profit Housing Associations" – see Chapter 1 for discussion.

operating companies at different levels of the management hierarchy (as well as key stakeholders such as residents), made it appropriate to explore subcultures at different levels of the organisation. Finally the case study framework broken up into layers or 'mini-cases' allowed for the in-depth investigation into the strategic planning and management of CI activities with snapshots of specific community projects as part of a multi-layered research approach.

4.2.2. Qualitative Methodology

The research methods chosen for this project are essentially qualitative. Related to the interpretive position (though not exclusively bound to it) qualitative research historically emerged with the blurring of disciplinary boundaries (Denzil and Lincoln, 2008.) This blurring of boundaries is reflected theoretically in the topic of this project and in the developed research questions which overlap a number of academic fields such as strategic management, organisational culture theory and institutional logics theories.

Cassel and Symon (1994, p. 7) suggest that qualitative research has a number of defining characteristics which include:

“... a focus on interpretation rather than quantification; and emphasis on subjectivity rather than objectivity; flexibility in the process of conducting research; an orientation towards process rather than outcome; a concern with context....and finally, an explicit recognition of the impact of the research process on the research situation.”

The focal issues of this study are complex phenomena such as organisational culture that are more perceived than measured, and are subjective depending on an individual's perceptions (Bryman, 1998). This would support the need to include views and perceptions from across the case study organisation to gain a more holistic understanding of the topical issues (Patton, 1980; Bryman, 1998). Organisational Culture and Subcultures are rather abstract concepts and thus difficult to capture quantitatively. With qualitative research on the other hand the researcher could attempt to uncover the complexity and nuances of organisational sub-cultures.

In the case of this project, apart from the researcher's inherent interpretive position, further motivation for a qualitative methodology was provided by considering what type of project would hold the most value in terms of both its academic contribution, and practically as an outcome for the case study organisation. An overview of the existing projects and data sources at HAX indicated that regular internal statistical audits were conducted, augmented by externally-contracted surveys such as staff attitude or customer profiling surveys. There would be a far greater value added by using the opportunity this project presented to conduct an in-depth, holistic qualitative research project. The surveys by external consultants, while providing a large quantity of data, presented the problem of being a sanitised 'etic' or outsider view. A qualitative research project with special access to the organisation would delve into the inner workings of the organisation thereby affording the opportunity to develop an 'emic' or insider's perspective (Saunders et al, 2003).

The dynamic character of an organisation such as HAX in a state of flux make it suited to a flexible qualitative research methodology. Indeed Cassel and Symon (1994) contend that only qualitative methods are sensitive enough to allow the detailed analysis of change in the context of organisational research and particularly dynamic organisations.

4.2.3. Grounded Theory

Methodology can be designed as theory-first (deductive) or theory-after (inductive) research (Saunders et al, 2000), with inductive approaches more typical of qualitative methodologies with a holistic, interpretive outlook (Bryman, 2001). As the researcher became immersed in fieldwork from the onset of this project, the research approach and design was by choice and necessity largely inductive. However, as the research cycle (Figure 4-1) indicates, different stages of the process reinforced and informed the research methodology. Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that no matter how inductive the approach, all researchers start off with some general theory, experience and objectives of the research, which will inform their research decisions. Ultimately with this study, a part-inductive, part-deductive approach to the empirical fieldwork was actually adopted, with some preconceived and identified questions informing the research direction, but also emerging empirical data employed to further hone the research enquiry and design.

For the analysis of data, the decision was taken to adopt a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Straus, 1968) for this research project. This approach is a theory-generating one which is grounded in the data and entails a constant moving backwards and forwards between data and emerging theoretical implications (Bryman, 1989). This type of research involves the interpretation of data in its social and cultural context (Holloway, 1997; Grix, 2001). It allows the data to emerge in an inductive way through a process of categorisation, reflection and conceptualisation (Saunders et al. 2003) in a systematic thematic reduction of empirical findings, generating theory from the primary information sourced (Glaser and Straus, 1968). While grounded theory is a primarily inductive method observing and distilling themes and patterns in the data (Glaser and Straus, 1968), in reality, as described in the paragraph above, initially and ultimately the research process for this project also adopted deductive processes as theory emerging from the empirical findings was related to relevant theoretical frameworks developed earlier in the research cycle. The caveat therefore, in the adoption of a grounded theory approach, is that inevitably some deductive processes and assumptions may be incorporated in the inductive research process, and rather than rigid divisions between the two approaches, “not only is it perfectly possible to combine approaches within the same piece of research, but in our experience it is often advantageous to do so” (Saunders et al, 2000, p. 88)

4.2.4. Alternative research approaches: management research, action research and social constructivism.

This project was envisaged as a collaborative case study based at a single organisation and the research framework was designed accordingly. However, before outlining some of the characteristics, strengths and weaknesses of case study research, it is worth considering aspects of other methodological approaches that may seem appropriate or relevant to this type of organisational research.

In an in-depth organisational case study, of which one aspect is to explore changing strategic management, and with many of the participants in middle and senior management positions, it would seem remiss not to consider some of the characteristics of management, as opposed to a purely academic social science approach. Indeed there is debate on whether management research can be regarded as a different tradition or rather just a recent field within social science research. Easterby-Smith et al (2002) describe 3 factors that make management research distinctive from the broader social sciences: Firstly the 'eclectic' nature of management which requires a multi-disciplinary understanding (for example drawing on anthropology, economics, mathematics) and being able to work across 'technical, cultural, and functional boundaries' (Easterby-Smith et al, 2002, p. 7). Secondly, managers tend to be busy people, associating a high cost to time, and unlikely to support the research unless for some business or personal gain. This will have consequences for choice of research methods, for example short interviews being more appropriate than

unstructured observation. Thirdly managers are action-oriented, with the view that the research should have practical implications, and often likely to take action on the results (Easterby-Smith et al, 2002).

While this project was not designed to be a piece of management research, some of the above factors are nevertheless applicable, such as a preference for more time efficient research methods such as interviews. In the case of some senior executives at HAX, appointments for 90 minute interviews had to be made six months in advance.

In a CASE partnership, expectations for practically useful results did also have an influence on the research aims and methodology of the project, as explained earlier, with the researcher having to consider the best value or contribution the research would make not only academically but also practically for the partner organisation as part of a reciprocity for the privileged open access to the association.

Moving onto action research, this type of research is not characterised by a specific method or technique, but rather is carried out after a required improvement is identified (Bell, 2005). Greenwood and Levin (1998) characterise action research as a combination of 3 essential elements: Research, Participation and Action, the absence of any of these rendering the action research incomplete. Action research is defined by Rappaport (1970, p. 499) as aiming “to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually accepted ethical framework.” Because of the

collaborative aspect of action research, participants are likely to learn a lot from the process itself (Easterby-Smith et al, 2002). While this CASE project is a collaborative one, within the arrangement with HAX, it has been positioned as an independent academic project rather than a consultative problem-solving exercise. This study was not been commissioned with any one particular problem in mind but was instead seen as an opportunity to explore the changing strategic directions of a large housing association. In this sense, while still aspiring to have both academic and practical outcomes, this project cannot be considered (by the definitions cited above) to be a piece of action research.

Moving onto another research approach, the relevance of a social constructionist outlook cannot be ignored in a case study designed to gain multi-layered perspectives on the same issues from a number of participants within one large housing association. This exploration of co-existent realities and the adoption of a reflective, interpretive research methodology could suggest epistemological links to a social constructionism which “*emphasises the relational qualities and the multiplicities of social realities*” and is therefore “*an adequate theory to guide qualitative research in a group context.*” (Cassel and Symon, 1994).

As part of social research, constructionism advocates a view that social reality is continuously in the process of being made, and that there is no single, defined and objective reality, but rather a reality defined or perceived by different actors (Gergen, 1985). In an organisational theory context, a social constructionist approach argues that rather than being objective entities,

organisations are socially constructed phenomena (Weick, 1979; Berger and Luckman, 1967). While social constructionism does not have a universally adopted definition, it still has certain understood and accepted tradition such as the denial of the objective status of knowledge and the construction of meaning through social interaction. Housing research has tended not to engage with the theoretical debates about method and focus, but rather research has been largely based on these shared traditions and assumptions, focusing on both the analysis of policy discourse and in international comparative research (Clapham, 2009; Haworth et al, 2004).

Interestingly, in certain comparative constructionist housing studies, links have been made between culture and political and institutional factors. Kemeny (2004) has applied social theory to housing research and investigated the social construction of tenures and their relationship to general political cultures. Kemeny (2004) used the concept of culture to argue that countries retain an individual housing structure that relates to political frameworks and welfare systems.

In a collection of papers, Jacobs et al (2004) explore how social constructionism contrasts with more traditional positivist approaches to housing research, and particularly housing policy related research, through the focus on subjectivity and interpretation. Clapham (2009) contends that while social constructionism takes as its basic premise the social construction of reality and the different perceptions of reality that may be held by individuals or groups, within a particular “reality” it may be possible to develop a common conception of how

actors would behave, particularly if the reality had a time and space limit. In this way constructionism could even be adapted to share insights with positivist approaches and might become more palatable an approach to housing policy makers.

These social constructionist arguments were considered during the research process when different aspects of research, such as the research design, theory mapping, and scoping fieldwork were being developed simultaneously. While considering the possibility of linking the project's multi-layered framework to a social constructionist methodology, a review of constructionist literature led the author to conclude that the all-encompassing viewpoint and research philosophy of social constructionism would not lend itself to being a component of a research methodology, developed during the research process. In a truly constructionist piece of research, the constructionist approach and philosophy would serve as the foundation and driving force behind the research process. While a true social constructionist paradigm would have to be embraced at the theoretical and methodological inception of a research study, it is nevertheless relevant to this thesis to consider recent work by academics working in the fields of housing and housing management who are now considering experimenting in approaches beyond pure social constructionism (Clapham, 2009). The emergence of new theories and ideas could in the future lend themselves to a less rigid adoption of constructionist principles, which would be relevant to a study like this which does implicitly acknowledge the multiplicity of socially constructed realities mediated by organisational and institutional factors.

4.3. Research Strategy: A Case Study Framework

Within a broader qualitative approach, this research project is framed in a case study format, which is not an uncommon strategy for qualitative studies in an organisation context (Silverman, 2005; Flick, 2006). Hakim (2000) argues that while qualitative research is concerned with obtaining people's own accounts and perspectives, a case study is fundamentally different, being concerned with obtaining a rounded picture of a situation from the perspectives of all persons concerned. According to Hakim (2000, p. 59), "The case study is the social research equivalent of a spotlight or the microscope: its value depends crucially on how well the study is focused."

Despite this collaborative research project having a pre-established case study remit, the appropriateness, advantages and disadvantages of a case study framework still need to be considered. Indeed, the understanding of what a case study represents as a methodological approach is perhaps even more critical in the circumstance where its adoption is a taken-for-granted and intrinsic part of the research design.

According to Yin's (1994) classic definition, a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Indeed the question of what is context and what is the phenomenon, or whether the organisation is the boundary or context depends

on the theory adopted or developed. In Yin's (1994) view the case study approach is a strategy rather than a method.

Hartley (1994, p. 208) describes a case study as consisting of

“a detailed investigation, often with data collected over a period of time, of one or more organisations, or groups within organisations, with a view to providing an analysis of the context and processes involved in the phenomenon under study.”

A case study approach can be particularly appropriate for individual researchers because it provides an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth (Bell, 2005). The strength of case studies lies in their potential to explore social processes as they unfold in organisations, allowing for a processual, contextual and longitudinal analysis of the action and meanings constructed within organisations (Hartley, 1994).

On the other hand, the perceived weaknesses of the case studies are the danger of selective reporting, and the lack of generalisability of results (Yin, 1981; Denscombe, 1998) which is related to research validity (which is addressed again in Section 5.6 of this chapter.) However

“if the study is well structured and carried out and makes no claims which cannot be justified, it may well be relatable in a way that will enable members of similar groups to recognise problems and possibly to see ways of solving similar problems in their own group.” (Bell, 2005, p. 17)

According to Hartley (cited in Cassel and Symon, 1994, p. 208)

“there exists a simplistic argument which says that case studies are ‘meaningful’ and ‘rich’ compared with the sometimes ‘dustbowl empiricism’ of quantitative techniques.....The counter argument (equally simplistic) is that case studies are lacking in rigour and reliability and they do not address the issues of generalizability which can be so effectively tackled by quantitative methods. However, this level and type of argument is totally outmoded. There is nothing about a method per se which makes it weak or strong. The argument about the method depends on two factors. First, the relationship between theory and method, and, second, how the researcher attends to the potential weakness of the method.”

In the same paper on case studies in organisational research Hartley (1994) describes the key value of theory in a case study, pointing out that without a theoretical framework, the researcher is in severe danger of providing description without wider meaning. This will be a recurring theme in both the defence of the research validity of this project as well as in later discussion on the strengths and academic contribution of this case study project.

4.4. Research Design

4.4.1. A Multi-layered Framework

Within the broader case study framework, the research strategy adopted is that of 5 mini-case studies or layers within the case organisation HAX. This strategy conforms to a collective case study type (Stake, 2000, p. 437) “*where a number of cases are studied in order to investigate some general phenomenon*” within HAX.

An alternative approach may have been for the researcher to select one particularly interesting aspect of one of the number of operating companies within the larger organisation HAX. However, the researcher did not feel that would be doing justice to the academic opportunity presented by the access to all parts of a large and dynamic housing association, or indeed be of any use or interest to the organisation themselves as a practical outcome. Other practical considerations were a proposed restructuring programme at HAX that did indeed come to fruition towards the latter stages of the project fieldwork. With the organisation in the state of flux, it did not seem sensible to focus the research on just one operating company at HAX. Given that the inevitable reshuffling of managers and positions in an organisational restructure, a narrow selection of research participants could lead to a lack of continuity of interviewees.

As described in earlier chapters and indeed referenced in the title of this thesis, this study adopted a multi-layered approach in a number of different ways, such

as the researcher's attempt to tie together methodology and theory by a multi-layered exploration of organisational sub-cultures linked to external and institutional factors. Arguably however, the main translation of this multi-layered framework was in the research design for the project, by taking vertical and horizontal cross sections to explore multiple views and co-existent realities through different layers across the management hierarchy and functional and geographic boundaries of the organisation. The choice of these cross sections or sampling points was derived from the research focus of the study, which itself was refined by the sector analysis and preliminary engagement with organisation as will be described in the following section.

4.4.2. Phases of engagement

After the period of preliminary scoping fieldwork from October 2007 to October 2008 combined with a sector analysis to identify key issues relating to the changing identity of HAs, the study's aims were refined to focus on the changing strategy and sub-cultures at HAX by tracking the development of its Community Investment strategy.

It is important to note here that the scoping period afforded the researcher the opportunity to shadow another piece of research that was also being conducted by the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies of the University of Birmingham as part of the collaborative research agreement between that department and HAX. This evaluation project was a piece of consultancy work that began prior

to the commencement of this case study, and was completed 18 months prior to the completion of this piece of research.

The scoping period was used by the researcher for familiarisation with the organisation, creating a background profile, identifying gatekeepers, networking with key participants and planning the next phase of empirical research. Data from this period was considered as secondary or background evidence. Shadowing involved meeting research participants, and observing and taking notes at interviews and meetings. Although the same key players at the organisation were interviewed in both the evaluation project as well as for this case study project, at all times there was clear distinction between the scope and nature of both projects which was reinforced by the staggered timeframe. At the same time, when the critical phase of primary fieldwork was conducted for the PhD, the researcher distanced herself completely from the evaluation project and did not participate in any of its related meetings or interviews until the end of the fieldwork period.

The preliminary fieldwork stage was critical in building relationships and identifying the key players and participants for the PhD project at the same time as the sector analysis was being conducted and methodological issues considered, as denoted in the research cycle, Figure 4-1.

There were distinct phases of engagement between the researcher and case study HAX and these are illustrated in Table 4-1. Primary fieldwork was undertaken from October 2008 to December 2009 using a multi-method approach that will be detailed in the next section of this chapter. This constituted

the main body of empirical research for this project, and involved a high level of interaction with HAX.

Table 4-1: Phases of Engagement

	Oct 07 – Oct 08	Nov 08 – Dec 2009	Jan 2010 – Oct 2010
PRELIMINARY / BACKGROUND INTERACTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locating gatekeepers • Networking • Building relationships • <u>Secondary data collection:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Evaluation interviews ➢ Documentary analysis 		
HIGH LEVEL INTERACTION		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main body of PhD Fieldwork • <u>Primary Data Collection:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Interviews ➢ Focus Groups, ➢ Participant Ob ➢ Observation • <u>Secondary Data Collection:</u> • Documentary analysis • Website sources 	
PHASING OUT			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited contact with key individuals (to keep research up-to-date) • Limited collection of Secondary Data • Executive Summary report and workshop presentation of research findings

Source: The Author (2009)

Finally from January 2010 to October 2010, the researcher deliberately detached herself from the organisation in a phasing out period. This idea was to maintain a limited contact with key individuals in the organisation, as part of maintaining relationships and the trust of participants, and keeping a pulse on any significant changes there, but at the same time maintaining an academic independence and facilitating the completion of, and exit strategy for the project. This period was used for collating and analysing data, while working on an executive summary-style report for HAX as well as draft chapters of the doctoral thesis.

4.5. Research Methods

While methodology encompasses an approach or philosophy to undertaking research, methods refer to particular research techniques or tools by which the research is undertaken. Although an ontological position often drives a research approach there is also a more practical approach to adopting appropriate tools first for obtaining the best data:

“Methods are selected because they will provide the data you require to produce a complete piece of research. Decisions have to be made about which methods are best for particular purposes and then data-collecting instruments must be designed to do the job.” (Bell, 2005, p. 116)

A multi-method approach was adopted both to add richness and depth to the information gathered and as part of a data triangulation strategy, which will be

described in further detail in Section 4.6 of this chapter which addresses the questions of research validity and reliability.

The primary method employed was the semi-structured, qualitative interview, with topic guides that included static and evolving themes for building up evidence systematically but also having the flexibility to capture some of the changes through a dynamic 14 month period at HAX.¹⁵ Another term used interchangeably with semi-structured interviews is non-standardised interviews which also describes the form of more flexible interviewing where lists of themes and questions are prepared beforehand, but may not all be covered (or even covered in a different order), depending on the context of the interview and how the conversation is flowing (Healy, 1991). Using more open-ended questions was suited to the explorative themes relating to the changing organisational culture at HAX, giving more scope for flexibility, while the set of themes developed around theoretical frameworks could be also integrated into topic guides.

While a popular qualitative technique, the complexity of interviewing can be understated. Saunders et al (2003, p. 252) identify the data quality issues with the use of semi-structured interviews as reliability problems (due to the lack of standardisation); and forms of bias that could negatively affect the research validity. The critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954; Hertzberg, 1987) which was incorporated in the project interview topic guides, is seen as a way of controlling for bias but the critical incident technique itself can produce the

¹⁵ Please see Appendix 2 for an example of an interview topic guide

problem of post-event rationalisation and evaluation (Easterby –Smith et al, 2002).

The first interview with participants was regarded as an ‘ice-breaker’ interview, and in most cases not recorded, since the researcher spent some time summarising the information sheet she had provided to participants prior to the interviews, which included the purpose of the PhD research and key aspects of the research design and methodology.¹⁶ Participants were encouraged to ask any questions about the study at this or indeed any stage of the research process. The confidentiality and anonymity of the interviews was emphasised and formalised in a participant consent form.¹⁷ Thereafter the researcher asked background questions regarding current and previous roles of the participants both within these organisations and in their careers or background in general. This was designed to help participants to relax, and feel comfortable while starting off with familiar subject matter. At the same time the researcher hoped that her genuine interest at this stage would make participants feel valued and encourage them to be forthright and open in their views on changes in the organisation.

Subsequent interviews were more standardised and although still semi-structured with some open-ended questions, the topic guide was adhered to more scrupulously, and the researcher guided and prompted rather than being actively involved in the discussion as per the ‘ice-breaker’ interview. Where consent was given, interviews were recorded for reliability and audit purposes

¹⁶ See Appendix 3. for the Participant Information Sheet

¹⁷ See Appendix 4 for the Participant Consent Form

and to authenticate verbatim where employed, but detailed notes were also taken by the researcher, which constituted the bulk of the empirical data collected.

The schedule of interviews is detailed in the fieldwork outline below, but the rationale behind the frequency of meetings related to the varying degrees of strategic influence participants had within the organisation, how distant or attached they were to the broad strategic and detailed operational concerns, how relevant their portfolio or area of expertise was to the research questions relating to the changing community investment programme and sub-cultures at HAX, and indeed to the logistics of scheduling and not wanting to be responsible for interviewee fatigue by interviewing 'for the sake of it'.

Another research method employed were focus group discussions, which were used to explore the views of groups, particularly transient groups, of participants where one-to one interviews would be less useful, and where the group discussion might make the participants feel more comfortable airing their views. Examples of these included a task team involved in the restructure of the organisation, and a group of ethnic minority tenants and social housing service users. Saunders et al (2003, p. 478) define focus groups as a "group interview, composed of a small number of participants, facilitated by a 'moderator', in which discussion is focused on aspects of a given theme or topic."

Focus groups are regarded as more natural than some techniques but still contrived to some extent as they are controlled situations. The loosely structured steered conversations are designed to be participant orientated, with

the group setting its own agenda, and this is what the researcher attempted to achieve, through a general topic guide including open-ended questions once again.¹⁸ The researcher was also aware that while focus groups can be a good exploratory tool, social pressures can condition participants' responses.

Observation and participant observation were additional qualitative research methods employed in this study both formally, for example attending meetings or community events, and also informally, such as the observation of organisational behaviour at the various offices of the case study organisation. These research methods, which can also be referred to as organisational ethnography were particularly useful in enhancing the understanding of the various sub-cultures at the housing association. In his book on organisational ethnography Neyland (2008) claims the strengths of ethnographic data are in providing a detailed in-depth picture of a group which can be developed around social, cultural and political issues that other methods find intangible. At the same time challenges are recognised such as the participative nature of the researcher's role which can lead to questions about objectivity, and the researcher influence on outcomes (Neyland, 2008). Some of the other research pitfalls associated with participant observation are that the technique can be time-consuming, requiring the researcher to be accepted by the individuals or groups being studied, and that the group being studied may not be typical thereby affecting lack of generalisability (Bell, 2005). However in the case of this study the defence of its research validity which ties in with the overall methodological approach also stands to bear in the choice of using participant

¹⁸ See Appendix 5 for a Focus Group Topic Guide

observation and observation as part of the multi-method strategy in a multi-layered investigation of the case study organisation.

There are a range of roles that can be adopted by the participant observer: the researcher as employee; researcher as an explicit role; interrupted involvement and observation alone (Easterby-Smith et al, 2002). Because of the breadth of organisation which the researcher attempted to capture, her role was more akin to that of interrupted involvement which involves the observer being present over periods of time, moving in and out of the organisation and combining observation with interviews. On occasions where observations were made, notes were taken in the process of the observation where possible, or soon after on the same day. These were then scripted and annotated, in the same way as documentary evidence. In terms of the weighting of evidence, primary results were first derived by the thematic analysis of interviews and focus groups, and these were corroborated by observation notes and documentary analysis.

This documentary analysis of secondary evidence was undertaken before and during the intensive fieldwork stage of the research project. This evidence included annual accounts, company surveys, internal reports, marketing and corporate literature, as well as employee newsletters. Documentary analysis can be used as a supplementary method to check the reliability of evidence given in interviews or even on its own as the primary method of research (Duffy, 2005).

When these documents were considered the researcher had to consider their credibility and authorship, as well as the style and social context of any documents (Bryman, 2001). According to Grix (2008, p. 81) “All documents have been written with a purpose in mind, are based on particular assumptions and are presented in a certain way or style.” The researcher therefore took into account the purpose and original audience of any document analysed. For example the intended audience and purpose of a staff newsletter differed from the annual accounts produced, which itself was dissimilar to a company survey produced for senior executives.

As a summary of the multiple research methods described, Table 4-2 cites the research objectives as outlined in the introduction of this thesis, with the research methods adopted to fulfil those objectives.

Table 4-2: Research Objectives and Methods

Research Objectives	Research Methods			
	Documentary analysis	Interviews	Focus groups	Observation / Participant Observation
1. Explore emergent strategy and influences through the example of key strategic and operational changes in CI over the duration of the research project.	X	X	X	

Research Methods				
Research Objectives				
	Documentary analysis	Interviews	Focus groups	Observation / Participant Observation
2. Explore key changes and critical incidents in the development of the organisation's CI strategy over 2 years as part of overall changes at the organisation.	X	X	X	
3. Identify (changing) sub-cultures i.e. shared values and multiple identities/ visions of the same organisation as well as the regional vs centralised bias of these sub-cultures.	X	X	X	X
4. Reveal participants' perceptions on the core purpose and identity of the organisation, and changes in strategy and culture.		X	X	X
5. Uncover the range of views for why and how CI is done/ should be done and relate to organisational culture and perceptions of the identity of the organisation.		X	X	X

Research Objectives	Research Methods			
	Documentary analysis	Interviews	Focus groups	Observation / Participant Observation
6. Link each mini-case study to a driving institutional logic i.e. local accountability or efficiency, or balance of logics.	X	X	X	X

Source: The Author (2008)

4.6. Fieldwork Outline

From November 2008 to December 2009 primary fieldwork was conducted in a multi-layered format investigating the processes of strategy-making in an overview of the evolving Community Investment programme, and stakeholder perceptions at the HAX. These ‘mini case studies’ were layered horizontally across the management or hierarchical structure of the organisation, but within these layers participants were selected across the functional and geographic divisions of the housing association so that all its main operating companies and one of its smaller subsidiaries were represented (See Table 4.4.).

For the primary project fieldwork, the total number of participants interviewed individually or in a focus group was 44. Groups that were observed ranged from

12 people up to around 60 people. The total number of interviews conducted were 62. There were 4 focus group discussions conducted. Most interviews and focus group discussions took place at the case study organisation's head offices in a large English city, and regional offices in the Midlands, North East, South East and South West, in both larger cities and smaller towns. Altogether the researcher visited or conducted interviews in 13 different locations around the organisation, including not only central and regional offices, but community centres and housing estates.

The majority of participants and interviewees were staff or employees at the case study organisation, ranging from the Chief Executive and Directors to senior, middle and frontline managers and housing officers. At the executive and director level these participants were predominantly middle aged, white males. At senior management and below, there were more female participants.

The organisation's employees that participated in the project were all first language English speakers and most were professional executives or managers. Board members were also interviewed who were again mainly older, white males, who had some connection with or experience in the social housing sector, and were often retired professionals. One independent Board member, however, was a female consultant from an ethnic minority background. A number of participants were housing tenants or service users. For one focus group discussion, all participants were from an ethnic minority background, mainly female and spoke very limited English. For this focus group a translator was present to help participants understand the questions and reply where

necessary. Apart from observation and participant observation at two family community events, all participants were adults.

Table 4-3 summarises some of the key facts and figures of the fieldwork logistic while Table 4-4 provides a description of the participants and research subjects and methods employed for each of these mini cases.

Table 4-3: Fieldwork Logistics – November 2008 to December 2009

Number of research participants (Interviews and focus groups)	44
Number of interviews conducted	62
Number of focus groups conducted	4
Size of groups for participant observation and observation	12- 60 people
No of office locations for interviews	8
No of community centres/ housing estates visited	10
No of towns and cities where fieldwork conducted	8

Source: The Author (2010)

By selecting management strata as sampling categories, the research design was flexible enough to accommodate the changes that occurred due to the restructuring and rationalising that took place at HAX. For example, in the management of community investment, original participants were the regional heads of community service of the 3 main operating companies, but after the

centralisation of that service, participants became the centrally-based functional or operational heads of service for Community Investment, with the former regional managers either being repositioned within the organisation or leaving the organisation altogether.

Table 4-4: Fieldwork Design: Multiple Layers of Case Study HAX

Layers	Subject	Methods
LAYER 1	Group and Operating Company Board members	<p>a) <u>Documentary analysis</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairman's reports Internal documents e.g. Internal reviews and minutes <p>b) <u>Semi-structured interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every 6 months with: Non- executive/ independent members of group and operating company Boards. <p>c) <u>Observation and Participant Observation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational behaviour at head office. Board and tenant 'away day' workshop.
LAYER 2	Group Executive and Senior/ Head Office Management	<p>a) <u>Documentary analysis</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group Executive reports Internal documents and minutes of meetings Publications, press releases, marketing sources Financial and performance data <p>b) <u>Semi-structured Interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every 4-6 months with: Group Chief Executive Special Projects Director (gatekeeper) Human Resources Director Marketing Director Operating Company Chief Executive/ -Group

		<p>Commercial Director</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating Company Chief Executive/ Housing Director <p>c) <u>Focus Group Discussion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task team created to manage organisational restructure <p>d) <u>Observation and Participant Observation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational behaviour at Head Office Executive Team and monthly managers' meetings
LAYER 3	Community Investment Management- Regional and Central Teams	<p>a) <u>Documentary Analysis</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Reports Strategy Documents <p>b) <u>Semi-structured Interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every 3-4 months with: Regional/ operating company heads of community investment at regional offices/ community centres. Director of centralised Community Investment department Heads of Service within centralised Community Investment Department <p>c) <u>Observation and participant observation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational behaviour at Regional and Head offices Meetings with sector partners on collaborative issues

<p>LAYER 4</p>	<p>A stand-alone BME Subsidiary Community Outreach Project: Strategic and Frontline/ Operational Management</p>	<p>a) <u>Documentary analysis</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board reports, annual accounts • External funding and internal strategic reports • Organisational and outreach literature e.g. pamphlets, leaflets, posters <p>b) <u>Semi-structured Interviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At 3-6 monthly intervals with key individuals: • Outreach manager • Outreach case worker • Housing officer • Board Chairperson • Chief Executive <p>c) <u>Focus group</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach service users <p>d) <u>Participant observation and observation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community events and workshops • Outreach Steering Committee Meetings • Observing organisational behaviour
<p>LAYER 5</p>	<p><u>Community Project Snapshots:</u></p> <p>Single or two visit 'snapshots' of 4 community projects and/or centres located in the North, Midlands and South East, representing the 3 main operating companies</p>	<p>a) <u>Documentary analysis</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports, leaflets, websites <p>b) <u>Interviews with staff or community members managing each of the community projects/ centres</u></p> <p>c) <u>Observation and participant observation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending a community fete and observing service users.

Source: The Author (2008)

Table 4-5 provides a detailed 14 month fieldwork schedule. In Layers 1 to 3, the codes refer to individual participants, apart from B7 which was a repeated focus group, as denoted by 'fg'. In the case of interviews and focus group discussion the transcripts were treated as units of analysis for the grounded theory approach which will be discussed in more detail in the following section of this chapter. In Layer 3 'c' and 'r' differentiate between central and regional as the subject of this particular layer of the organisation, that is CI management, changed in the organisational restructure of HAX from regional CI management teams to a single centralised department.

In the specialist subsidiary layer 4, specifically D5 and D6, these were more formal opportunities for observation ('o') and participant observation ('po'), one being an active participation in an equality and diversity workshop while the other refers to the attendance of the researcher of a number of Steering Committee Meetings, the content of which was critical to the future strategic direction of that subsidiary association.

Apart from the specific indication of focus groups and participant/observation, all other codes in Layers 1-4 refer to individual participants in interviews. While all interviews are reflected in this schedule, not all observation and participant observation occasions can be included as these were too numerous, for example observation in the various office locations where interviews were conducted. Indeed from an interpretive and reflexive position, every interaction with HAX created impressions and contributed to the picture built up of the

organisation, particularly regarding its changing sub-cultures. Layer 5 is treated slightly differently as the units of analysis were the 4 project snapshots, which were built up by an amalgamation of transcripts from semi-structured interviews, informal interviews during site visits and fieldwork notes from observation of service users or residents at the community centres or projects. and in this table, coding is not included as each project included interviews or group interviews as well as an observation of service users. A detailed description of these individual snapshots is provided in Chapter 9 of this thesis.

Table 4-5: Fieldwork Schedule

Fieldwork Schedule: Nov 08 – Dec 09		Nov 08	Dec 08	Jan 09	Feb 09	Mar 09	Apr 09	May 09	Jun 09	July 09	Aug 09	Sep 09	Oct 09	Nov 09	Dec 09
L 1	A1														
	A2														
	A3														
L 2	B1														
	B2														
	B3														
	B4														
	B5														
	B6														
	B7(fg)														

		Nov 08	Dec 08	Jan 09	Feb 09	Mar 09	Apr 09	May 09	Jun 09	July 09	Aug 09	Sep 09	Oct 09	Nov 09	Dec 09
L 3	C1-r/c														
	C2-c														
	C3-c														
	C4-c														
	C5-r														
	C6- r														
	C7-r														
L 4	D1														
	D2														
	D3														
	D4														
	D(po) 5														
	D(o) 6														
	D (fg) 7														
L 5	Project1:														
	Project 2														
	Project 3:														
	Project 4:														

Source: The Author (2008)

4.7. Data Analysis

Many texts contrast quantitative and qualitative philosophies in the analysis of data. The former is seen as having a distinct separation between the stages of data collection and data analysis, and the latter with no clear separation between the stages. Silverman (2005, p.152) in his guide to qualitative research encourages researchers to '*analyse your own data as you gather it.*'

The challenges of analysing qualitative data are well documented. Bryman and Burgess (1994) reflect on some recurrent themes of qualitative data analysis, such as the bulk and complexity of the data and the lack of distinction between the data collection and data analysis phases. The 'clear explanation of analysis' expected is made tricky by a lack of clarity and transparency of the coding and data analysis process in much of qualitative research. Bryman and Burgess (1994, p. 224) contend that "*it is still not absolutely clear how issues or ideas emerge in order to end up in the finished written product,*" while Hartley (1994, p. 220) concurs that "*how researchers get from the recording of their data to their interpretation and conclusions is the part of (especially qualitative) research which is least well described in research methodology.*" In an attempt to address this 'lack of clarity' further discussion in this section describes in detail, the data analysis technique employed for this project and illustrates this with an example in Table 4-6.

Essentially qualitative data analysis requires a researcher *‘to condense highly complex and context-bound information into a format which tells a story that is fully convincing to the reader’* (Easterby-Smith et al, 2002, p.117) In the case of this project, a reflexive, interpretive position was adopted and an explicit distinction was not drawn between the collection of data, its analysis and its interpretation. There are different approaches to coding that can be adopted in qualitative research. The part-deductive, part-inductive grounded theory approach in this study lent itself to the choice of a data reduction strategy of systematic thematic analysis (Phillmore, 2008), a derivation of thematic coding which is appropriate for comparing case studies or in relation to a specific issue (Flick, 1998, p. 192). A systematic thematic reduction of data in a grounded theory project, where themes uncovered and distilled are used to generate the theoretical outcomes of the research. Saunders et al (2003, p.380) describe four general qualitative data analysis steps which echo some of the processes of the systematic thematic technique and adhere to a grounded theory approach: *“Categorisation; unitising data; recognising relationships and developing categories to facilitate this, and developing and testing hypotheses to reach conclusions.”*

For the purposes of this project, the detailed interview and focus group notes were first written and typed up using broad themes according to the topic guides and key research questions, that is relating to strategic management, organisational culture and institutional logics. The same was done for the researcher’s observations and participant observation notes, as well as for the documents used as secondary sources. These pre-coded key themes were

deliberately broad and not too prescriptive so that further sub- themes could emerge inductively. This analysis was done systematically, layer by layer through the 5 layers of this study and this is reflected in the structure of the empirical discussion in Chapters 7, 8 and 9.

All notes and transcripts were then further annotated with sub-themes, the themes were then divided into cluster with duplicate themes were removed before each theme was finally defined and put into a logical order. This description could mistakenly create the impression that the data analysis was done in a linear manner. In fact while systematic, the process was not linear but a continuous process of distillation, adding of new ideas and the re-arrangement of themes and sub-themes to analyse and refine the data. Chapter 10 of this thesis synthesises these common themes across the layers, to create an overall picture of the research findings and main specific themes that emerged across HAX. This data analysis technique, using common clusters of themes, enabled a comparative coded analysis across the layered study, ultimately linking the research findings to the theoretical framework. In this way the story of changes in the management of CI across each of the 5 layers of HAX were linked to a driving institutional logic and a prevailing sub-culture with distinct characteristics. These were then finally distilled to arrive at the theoretical outcome of theoretical matrix which captured the changing culture and direction of the organisation as reflected in its community investment strategy.¹⁹ Without wanting to pre-empt the ensuing empirical chapters, but to illustrate this process of systematic thematic analysis and reduction of data,

¹⁹ See the final section of Chapter 10

Table 4-6 provides a worked-through illustration of the data analysis process, using Layer 2 of HAX as the example.

Table 4-6: Worked-Through Example of Data Analysis

Layer 2 – A systematic thematic analysis				
Stage 1: Pre-determined themes	Stage 2: Layer 2 Findings	Stage 4: Thematic clusters	Stage 3: Links to theoretical framework	Stage 3: Layer 2 Findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Management of CI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiency Financial viability 'The Business case' Consistent service offer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic focus CI Management CI Delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business focus Efficiency and consistency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Org Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central/ Functional Corporate vision Promoting single identity (80/20 rule) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Org Structure Leadership and Power Structure Organisational Identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub-cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial focus Corporate outlook Visionary Centralised, top-down management Policy and procedure Promoting cultural homogeneity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional Logics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discretionary Part of a business plan Adding value in the external environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountability CI rationale Relationship with tenants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple institutional logics: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consumerist Commercial Logic Centrally-driven Consistent service offer

The researcher also deliberated over using electronic qualitative data analysis software such as NVIVO, considering the advantages and disadvantages of the tool in relation to this specific project. With advice from peers and on-line reviews, as well as attending university-based taster courses, the researcher came to the conclusion that the cyclical, iterative methodological approach over 2 years of fieldwork (scoping fieldwork included) with its blurred phases of data collection and analysis (Silverman, 2005) and the large volume of qualitative data involved, was not as suited to using data analysis software as perhaps a more delineated research project with more defined stages of data collection and analysis. The researcher also felt that part of the reflexive and interpretive character of the project could be enhanced by the 'manual' analysis of data by the researcher. Indeed in describing the advantages and also potential pitfalls of qualitative data analysis software Saunders et al (2003, p. 403) concede that the use of such software could in some instances *"encourage analytical procedures that lead to the fragmentation of the data you collect where it would be more appropriate to analyse this using an approach that preserves the narrative flow and qualities of this data."*

However, an advantage of utilising data analysis software might have been to address the question of biased selecting of data in qualitative analysis, contributing to the reliability and validity of a project. The next section of this chapter considers some of these issues relating to the reliability and validity of this study.

4.8. Reliability and Validity

Easterby-Smith et al (2002, p. 53) consider positivist, relativist and constructionist perspectives on validity, reliability and generalisability, which have been adapted below in Table 4-7. below:

Table 4-7: Validity, Reliability and Generalisability

	Viewpoint:		
	Positivist	Relativist	Constructionist
Validity	Do the measures correspond closely to reality	Have a sufficient number of perspectives been included	Does the study clearly gain access to the experiences of those in the research setting?
Reliability	Will the measures yield the same results on other occasions	Will similar observations be reached by other observers?	Is there transparency in how sense was made from the raw data?
Generalisability	To what extent does the study confirm or contradict existing findings in the same field?	What is the probability that patterns observed in the sample will be repeated in the general population?	Do the concepts and constructs derived from this study have any relevance to other settings?

Source: Adapted from Easterby-Smith et al (2002, p. 53)

This table is a useful reference point for understanding the concepts of validity and reliability pertaining to this research project, which ascribes most closely to

the relativist viewpoint, while still having some sympathy towards a constructionist perspective. Generalisability in the context of this reference is similar to the traditional definition of external validity which defines the domains to which the results of the study may be generalised (Easterby-Smith et al, 2002). Earlier in this chapter, the argument was put forward that one of the disadvantages of case studies are their lack of generalisability which ties in to questions about research validity. Following on from this argument, this project has sought to address the problems of generalisability through the transferability of theory, by incorporating strategic management, organisational culture and institutional logics to frame the multi-layered case study.²⁰ This reiterates Hartley's (1994, p. 210) view that

“ without a theoretical framework, a case study may produce fascinating details about life in a particular organization but without any wider significance. Indeed, a case study without the discipline of theory can easily degenerate into a ‘story’....The point is that without a theoretical framework, the researcher is in severe danger of providing description without wider meaning.”

Yin (1994) suggests that to achieve validity, case studies should be built up over time, and should also utilize multiple sources of evidence. The research design of this project, conducting fieldwork over an extensive period of time, as well as selecting horizontal and vertical sampling points across the layers of HAX contribute to the research validity of the project. Indeed a strong rationale

²⁰ The detailed development of this theoretical framework was described in the previous Chapter 4

behind the multi-layered approach has been to ensure 'a sufficient number of perspectives have been included' (Table 4-7) thereby contributing to relativist view of validity.

Triangulation can be regarded as a research strategy to strengthen the validity of a study, while the types most cited are both method and data triangulation (Bryman, 2001; Grix, 2001; Saunders et al, 2003; Bell, 2005). Grix (2001, p. 84) describes method triangulation as the process in which the researcher employs two or more different research methods to investigate the same phenomena, while data triangulation is the process in which the researcher uses multiple sources of data to 'cross check' evidence. In this project the researcher has attempted to achieve both types of triangulation, using the multi-method approach described earlier in this chapter, and also the triangulation of data through different data sources such as primary interview transcripts and observation notes, and secondary sources such as documents and websites.

Relating pertinent issues at the case study HAX to a broader social housing sector concerns, and using those macro-level concerns to generate key research questions at the organisation, as reflected by this project's research cycle (Figure 4-1), is also a way of locating the case study in a valid context.

Reliability in the context of this project seeks to address the questions 'Will similar observations be reached by other observers?' and 'Is there transparency in how sense was made from the raw data?' (Table 4-7) The detailed account of the data analysis technique provided in Section 4.5 of this chapter hopefully goes some way to address the latter of these questions. In the case of similar

observations, the researcher was fortunate to have access to both findings from reports conducted by HAX, as well as the results of the other research work being conducted by her department at HAX, which could be used to corroborate the evidence and research findings of her case study project.

Of course there are still challenges to the case study reliability that are difficult to control and that the researcher needed to be aware namely participant error and bias, or observer error and bias (Robson, 2002). To increase the reliability of the research, the researcher made use of a fieldwork diary, as well as recording interviews where participants felt comfortable for the researcher to do so.

4.9. Research Ethics and Managing a Collaborative Relationship

4.9.1. Access and Consent

The research ethics of an organisational case study have both academic and practical implications, from the project's inception, through to the fieldwork and the management of the data output.

Gaining access to an organisation in a case study can present ethical dilemmas. While the collaborative research arrangement with HAX removes traditional problems of access, "official access is only part of the story, the next problem is to obtain co-operation and trust inside" (Easterby-Smith et al, 2002, p. 73). Of course managing and respecting that trust comes with its own set of

responsibilities. In this instance, because of the collaborative research agreement between the case study organisation HAX and CURS at the University of Birmingham, the researcher was afforded open access to HAX. This access was managed with the assistance of a gatekeeper or key contact at the organisation, who was a senior executive with the role of co-ordinating the research logistics where appropriate. This gatekeeper was a research participant in the case study. As research questions were refined during the preliminary fieldwork stages, and with guidance from the researcher's supervisors and the key contact at the organisation, participants within the organisation were identified, and were all amenable to participating in the research, being aware of the research programme from the outset.

In addition to the research agreement above, all participants who were interviewed individually or in a focus group were provided with an information sheet with a summary of the research aims and methods, and requested to sign a consent form.²¹ In this way the researcher gained informed consent from these participants. For those participants with a limited understanding of English a translator explained the contents of the information sheet and an opportunity was provided for participants to ask any questions relating to the research before signing the consent form. Apart from one of the focus group discussions, where participants were compensated for their travel and time with supermarket vouchers, no other financial compensation was provided to participate in the study.

²¹ See Appendix 3 for the Participant Information Sheet and see Appendix 4 for the Participant Consent Form

The right of participants to withdraw from the study without needing to provide any reason was included in the consent form. Although none of the participants withdrew from the study, a number of people (including the main gatekeeper) did leave the organisation during and after the final fieldwork phase when the organisation went through a major restructure.

4.9.2. Ethical Obligations and Responsibility to Participants

Since participants came from different levels in the management hierarchy, there were occasions where the researcher was privy to senior management information, of which middle management and frontline staff were not aware. This included information on critical incidents and the strategic direction of the organisation as part of the vision of its executive leaders, where that information had not been passed down through management tiers. A deliberate and concerted effort was made not to intentionally or inadvertently betray the confidence of junior managers to senior managers in any way, particularly as the preliminary and final fieldwork stretched over a two and half year period.

Participants on occasion would enquire whether researcher had any knowledge on the future strategic directives which could implicate them, and a high level of discretion and confidentiality needed to be applied at all times. Similarly certain frank disclosures and perceptions from non-executive directors, middle management and frontline staff could have been poorly received by their line managers, or indeed could have compromised the impartiality of the researcher.

In this case the risk was greater for these lower tier staff were in a more vulnerable position having less power and authority. Again participants were assured that all data would be confidential and anonymised, and this had achieved through codification of participants and their responses, in addition to anonymising the organisation with a pseudonym and changing details regarding the location of subsidiaries and offices. Because of the unique characteristics of certain parts of the organisation, such as its one BME subsidiary housing association, it did prove challenging to completely anonymise every aspect and still arrive at a meaningful conclusion regarding findings. To deal with this challenge, the researcher sought the advice of her academic supervisors, and where applicable also had participants approve these final interview draft notes. Furthermore, as a result of the restructuring programme at HAX, a number of participants who expressed strongly held views in the interviews, did eventually leave the organisation and were therefore no longer exposed within the organisation.

Another ethical issue that affected the research design was the moral obligation the researcher felt to participants, particularly more vulnerable participants such as frontline CI staff, residents and service users. This vulnerability was made even more pertinent given the rationalisation of some services occurring through the centralisation of the organisation's CI department. Extra care had to be taken not to create the impression that this piece of research would in any way affect the participants, either beneficially or detrimentally. Ethical motivations inevitably influence the research design too, leading to the researcher's decision to engage with tenants and local communities in 1 or 2

day 'project snapshots' so that a multi-layered view of the organisation could be gained without overburdening participants or creating false expectations of any reciprocal improvement in service.

4.9.3. Academic Independence and Broader Ethical Ramifications

Another ethical concern with this study was that because of the close collaborative arrangement and the open researcher access to the organisation, questions would be raised regarding whether the organisation would overtly or surreptitiously attempt to 'set the agenda' or influence the aims and findings of the PhD research.

Fortunately, perhaps due to the professionalism of participants at HAX or because other consultative research work was simultaneously taking place at the organisation, the researcher was given the freedom and support to develop her own aims and explore areas of interest that were both relevant to broader questions at sector level and pertinent to the HAX itself. Consciously, the researcher felt her academic independence was not being compromised, although being ultimately quite familiar with the research participants she may have taken-for-granted implied pressures and organisational expectations.

As far as any potential wider repercussions, as with any research in a politically loaded area of research, the researcher had to be aware of any manipulation of the project's findings. The housing market in the UK was at that stage, and remains today, a politically fraught entity. Added to this were recessionary

economic tensions, divergent stakeholder expectations on the role of large HAs in society, and increasing public antagonism about the ‘fat cat’ salaries of senior executives and directors at HAs. The researcher did have to consider the risk, although very slim, that the findings of this study could be exploited by the case study organisation itself or third parties for political mileage.

To minimise these risks the researcher was as clear as possible about the remit, aims and objectives of the study and unequivocal about its academic independence.

4.9.4. Feedback and Ethical Reciprocity

Regarding the feedback to the organisation which is part of an ethical reciprocity, prior to completing the thesis, the researcher produced an executive summary style report with an overview findings and conclusions, and presented this to the case study organisation at a PhD feedback workshop event in October 2010.²² The workshop was attended by the researcher and her supervisor and about 15 attendees from HAX, 12 of who had been participants in the study. The HAX attendees were also representative of the different layers of the study, and held a range of positions in management and governance across the organisation. The workshop was structured into a presentation of the summary report and then a workshop discussion with a pre-circulated topic guide.²³ The researchers’ presentation was well received while the workshop

²² See Appendix 6 for the Abstract and Contents of the PhD Feedback Report

²³ See Appendix 7 for the PhD Feedback Workshop programme and Discussion Topic Guide

provoked some challenging debate as well. Some of the discussion points from this debate are incorporated in the final chapter of this thesis, looking ahead at the future for HAX. Where the research participants in the study were not able to attend this workshop (such as residents who could not travel to HAX's head offices) copies of this report were made available to them.

One other significant piece of work was done a year previously as *quid pro quo* for the time and involvement at the organisation's smaller subsidiary housing association, SHA, (Layer 4 of this study). The researcher jointly prepared a report with the manager of its Community Outreach Service there, reflecting on the work that was achieved there, as well as looking ahead to the future demand and scope for housing-related outreach work targeted at ethnic minority groups in that city. This report was included with the Annual Accounts provided to both the association's own and the larger group Boards.²⁴

4.9.5. Ethical Protocol

As part of the ethical protocol for doctoral research at the University of Birmingham, the researcher completed a 'PhD Application for Ethical Review'²⁵, providing an overview of the research, and detailed account of the ethical issues pertaining to this particular project, as described in this section. With regard to the storage, access and disposal of data, the research data for this project is currently stored on the University of Birmingham system. The data will

²⁴ See Appendix 8 for An Executive Summary and Contents of the SHA joint report

²⁵ See Appendix 9 for Ethical Review form

be stored for 3 years after the completion of the study after which it will be disposed of as confidential waste. Detailed contractual obligations regarding intellectual property rights (belonging to the University of Birmingham) and the non-exclusive, non-transferable license granted to the organisation HAX to use the results and arising intellectual property, can be found in the Intellectual Property Rights Agreement²⁶ which is standard documentation for a CASE studentship.

4.10. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to discuss the methodological approach that was adopted to fulfil the aims and objectives of this study. The practical and academic rationale behind the research framework has been outlined, including the philosophical motivation behind the methodology, the case study approach, multi-layered framework, and fieldwork outline. Some consideration has also been given to the various research methods employed, and how they related to the research task at hand. Triangulation of methods and data were discussed with reference to the research validity of this project, while issues regarding research were also addressed. Finally the particular ethical concerns for this study were deliberated over, and the relationship between the researcher and the case study organisation HAX were described in detail. Interspersed in the relevant sections along the way, has been an acknowledgement of the limitations and potential pitfalls in the broad methodological approach, the case study

²⁶ See Appendix 10 for the IPR document

framework and specific research methods adopted, and in the managing a case study relationship.

Critical to the research approach was maintaining a reflexive, interpretive viewpoint and being critically aware of the element of subjectivity in the process.

CHAPTER 5:

HAX- A CASE STUDY PROFILE AND BACKGROUND

5.1. Introduction

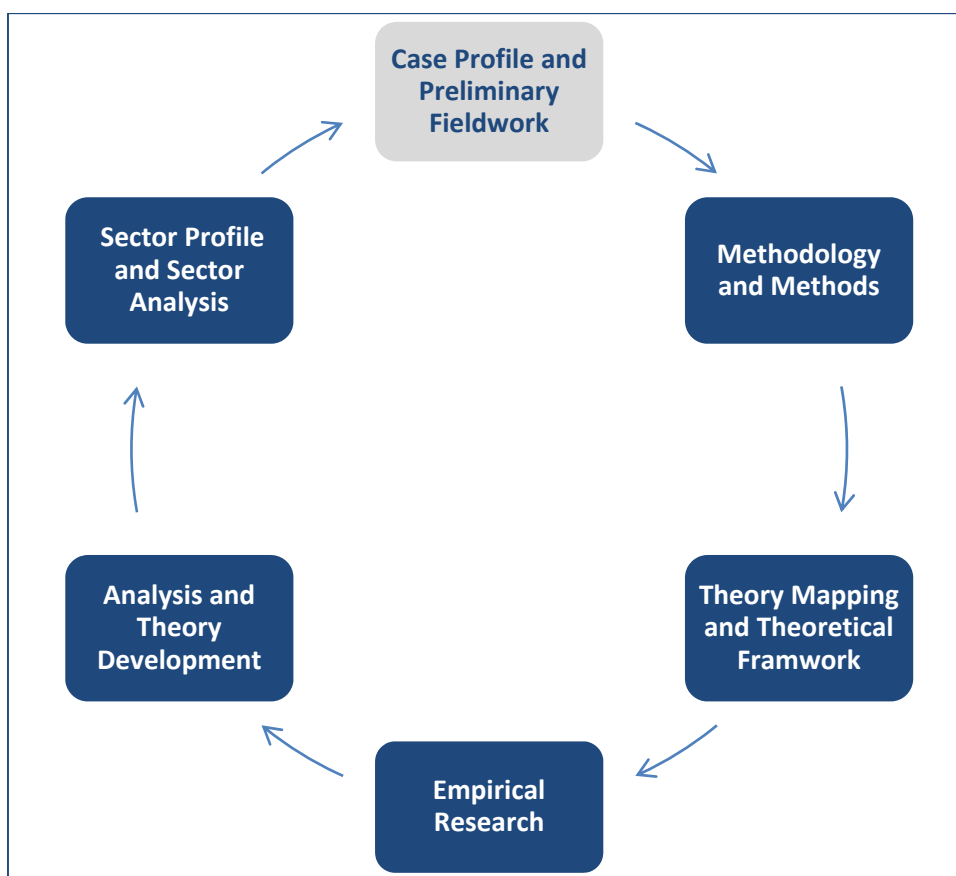
Having discussed the research methodology and fieldwork design in the previous chapter the purpose of this chapter is to provide a background to the case study organisation HAX to help inform the empirical findings and analysis of the following chapters. In the research cycle (Figure 5-1) this stage is located as Case Profile and Preliminary Fieldwork which reflects the dual purpose of this chapter, that is to provide a background description of the case study organisation and also an overview of the early scoping fieldwork that helped inform the direction of the research project in parallel with the sector analysis and theory mapping stages.

The period of preliminary scoping fieldwork from October 2007 to October 2008 (described in the previous methodology chapter as part of the phases of engagement) provided the opportunity not only to identify gatekeepers and build a rapport with research participants but also to build a profile of the organisation and identify key issues that would be explored further empirically. This was done through meetings, interviews, observation and documentary analysis as detailed in Chapter 4.

The data from this period of the project has been dealt with as background or preliminary evidence to the main body of multi-layered evidence presented in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. Sections 5.3. to 5.4. highlight the findings of this scoping

work as well as overview of the changes taking place at the organisation , reflected as both internal changes at the organisation around strategy, culture and CI, as well as the strategic impacts of external sector-level drivers. These are preceded in section 5.2. by a history and profile of the case study organisation HAX

Figure 5-1: Research Cycle: Case Profile and Preliminary Fieldwork



Source: The Author (2008)

Of course, external trends and drivers do not always have a fixed starting point on a timeline, and likewise critical incidents at an organisation do not spontaneously occur at a given moment in a vacuum of previous activity. Therefore, while this chapter was broadly intended to provide a background

profile of HAX, and build a picture of the organisation through multiple sources including early empirical evidence from the scoping period, it has not artificially attempted to delineate the evidence in pre–October 2008 and post-October 2008 categories²⁷. Likewise some internal reports and other documentary evidence that may have been produced at HAX after October 2008, with clear relevance and critical to understanding the main themes of this study, are referred to in both this Chapter and the subsequent ones.

Furthermore, in the interest of protecting the anonymity of HAX and the research participants of this study, the facts and figures provided in this chapter and particularly in Section 5.2, have been aggregated and blurred where appropriate.

5.2. Background

5.2.1. History

As one of the largest HAs in England, HAX is made up of three main operating companies (OPCO 1, OPCO 2 and OPCO 3) as well as a number of smaller, niche subsidiaries such as smaller HAs, and a maintenance and repairs service.

HAX owns and manages a housing stock of over 50 000 homes, in over 80 Local Authorities across England including major towns and cities, as well as in some rural areas in the South West, East, Midlands and North Regions. Its

²⁷ October 2008, being the end of the scoping period and the start of the designed intensive fieldwork phase. See Chapter 4 for further detail.

development programme provides up to 1000 new rented and low cost home ownership properties (since 2008) in over 30 of these Local Authorities areas throughout the country.

The bulk of housing stock at HAX²⁸ is owned and managed through 3 large operating companies, which have come together as a group under the umbrella parent organisation HAX through a series of mergers over the last 10 years. The history of HAX therefore is the collective history of OPCOs 1, 2 and 3, as well as a subsequent changes and developments at HAX as a unified organisation, which is the area this study explores.

OPCO 3 is the oldest of the HAs, with its philanthropic origins in a Victorian charitable trust to house the urban poor. OPCO 1 was formed in the 1960s by local businessmen and professionals for providing housing to key workers in health and education. OPCO 2 is the newest of the associations, being less than 20 years old, at the time of this study, and formed as a part of Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of houses from city borough councils to social housing providers. Table 5-1 provides a timeline of critical events and developments in the history of HAX.

According to company literature *“As a social business our surpluses are invested in our communities, our existing homes and our active new homes development programme.”* (HAX, Corporate Brochure, 2008)

²⁸ Over 45000 of its 50 000+ properties

Table 5-1: HAX: A Timeline of Critical Events and Key Developments

Dates	Developments
2009 – 2010	Credit ratings agency Moody's issue HAX with long term issue rating of 'Aa2.
2008 – 2009	Restructuring programme brings all OPCO companies together in one housing management service under the HAX brand HAX launches a £150+ million bond on the bond market
2006- 2007	HAX and OPCO3 merge to become one of the largest housing groups in the sector, and in the top 10 HA developers with large joint Housing Corporation grant
2005-2006	OPCO3 and another HA (Fair Homes) amalgamate into a new OPCO3 OPCO1 receives large regional Housing Corporation grant allocation
2003-2004	HAX becomes parent company of OPCO2, and the following year they merge with OPCO 1
2001-2002	The HAX Group is created to become the parent company to OPCO2 The BME association, SHA joins OPCO3
1999- 2000	Community Repair Services is set up to deliver repairs and maintenance services to Fair Homes OPCO1 mergers with another regional HA, Bright Buildings
1996-1997	The Customer Service Centre at OPCO2 is initiated OPCO1 is formed as the parent of a number of smaller HAs and management services
1991-1992	OPCO2 Housing Association is created in large scale voluntary transfer of urban housing stock
1962-1964	OPCO1 is formed by a group of local businessmen and professionals

Dates	Developments
1900 – 1910	OPCO3 founded as a charitable trust with significant funds bequeathed to provide social housing for the urban poor in England First new homes are completed within a few years

Source: www.HAX.com, 2010; HAX Annual Reports, 2007 – 2010

5.2.2. Values And Strategic Vision

While one of the main objectives of this study has been to uncover the values underlying strategic decision-making at HAX through multiple view points across the organisation, the values and strategic themes described here are those that have put been put forward by HAX in its accounts, reports and corporate literature. They provide a useful background and are indeed reflective of the organisational culture promoted by the senior executive team and decision-makers at HAX.

The core strategic themes at HAX²⁹ were:

- **Growth:** growing the business by providing more affordable housing and maintaining investment in the existing stock and associated community services.
- **Good customer service** - delivering good customer service by maintaining customer satisfaction levels, and reflecting the needs of different customers and locally determined preferences.

²⁹ Cited in company documents during the fieldwork, and included on the organisation's website in 2011 during the write-up phase for this thesis

- **Increasing the organisation's influence** – building the HAX brand to gain recognition for the organisation's strengths and achievements, and also increasing influence in the way local and central government policies are shaped.
- **Maintaining financial strength** - maintaining a strong financial position particularly in challenging economic circumstance.

In addition to these the organisation wanted to emphasise 'trust and integrity' as well as a 'willingness to innovate.' Core and underlying values were related to the organisation's view of itself as a social business:

"As a social business we manage our money well so that we can invest our surpluses in what we believe in – our residents and our communities. We want to maximise life chances for our residents and create places for communities to thrive."

How HAX attempted to fulfil these aspirations, particularly around CI activities, and the underlying logics influencing strategy-making, will be explored empirically in this study.

5.2.3. Key Facts and Figures: Performance data

Recent performance data, from 2009 onwards, is useful in building a current profile of HAX. Key data is included in Table 5-2 which reveals the scale of

activity at HAX as well as revenue and operating surplus levels indicative of its position as one of the largest HAS in England.

Table 5-2: HAX - Key Facts and Figures: 2009 – 2010³⁰

Net Surplus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over £40million
Revenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over £260 million
Profits on sales (including shared ownership)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approx £6 million
Community Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £2 million invested in communities “to help get residents back into education, training and employment, tackling debt and raising incomes and helping people to live healthier lives.”
Repairs and maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £95 million invested in existing properties and £55million on repairs and improvements 150 000 repairs to properties Over 150 000 residents 550 repairs a day
New Developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approx 3000 new homes under development or in the development pipeline (in a 3 year plan)
Level of HCA grant funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over £130 million

(Source: HAX Annual Report 2009-2010, www. HAX.com, HAX, Corporate Brochure 2009)

At the time when this study was conducted, performance data on HAX was obtained on the years prior to the research commencing; that is from the years

³⁰ Figures based on 2009-10 data, averaged to preserve anonymity of HAX

2006 to 2008. Tables 5-3 and 5-4 highlight some of this data, and where possible locates it in the context of the other largest HAs in the sector.³¹

Table 5-3: Financial Performance of HAX and Other Large HAs in the Sector (2006 – 2008)

	Stock owned and managed	Tangible Assets 06/07	Turnover 07/08	Operating Profit/ Surplus 07/08	Net Profit/ Surplus 07/08	Turnover 06/07	Operating Profit/ Surplus 06/07	Net Profit/ Surplus 06/07
	No. of properties	£b	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
HAX	50 000+	1.8	203	63	25	199	62	27
Helping Homes	50 000+	1.6	-	-	-	176	17	6
The Dwellings Group	55 000+	2.3	-	-	-	338	66	20
KAYA	55 000+	1.2	244	73	44	193	61	46

Source: Online annual company accounts

³¹ Other large HAs in the sector have also been anonymised so as not to inadvertently reveal the identity of HAX.

5.2.4. Organisational Structure

At the top of the governance structure at HAX is its Group Board which approves high level strategic and policy decisions on the recommendation of the Senior Executive Team at HAX. The Board monitors performance and holds the organisation to account on its financial performance. The Group Board is headed by the Group Chairperson at HAX, while the Senior Executive Team is led by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of HAX. The executive team are responsible for the day-to-day operations at HAX, and head a number of directorates at HAX, as indicated in figure 5-2.

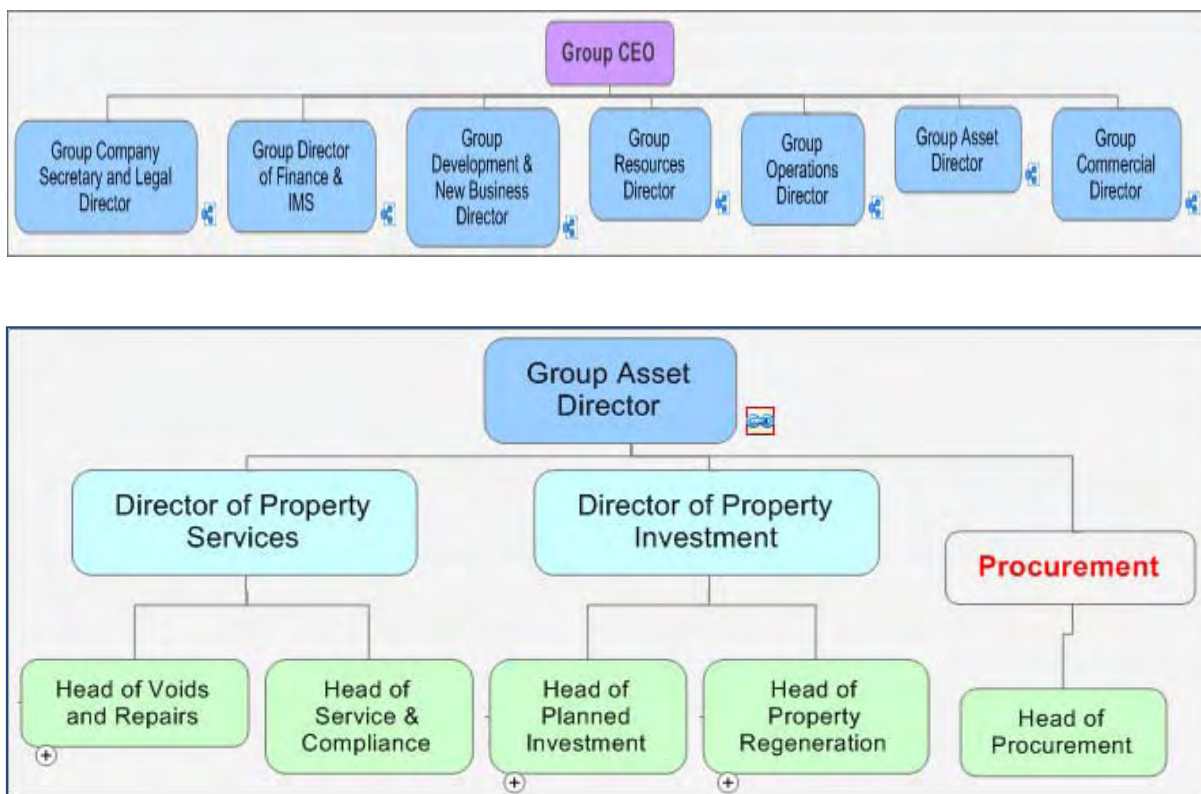
By the end of the fieldwork period at HAX, while its operating companies have been functionally amalgamated under the HAX operational brand, legally OPCO1, 2, and 3 were still separate entities and therefore each of the operating companies and subsidiaries still had a company Board to *“govern the specific operating companies, provide accountability, resolve tension between stakeholders, give advice to management and provide strategic direction.”* (www.HAX.com)

5.3. Strategy, Culture and Community Investment in a Changing Organisation

This section considers the strategic changes at HAX, exploring its organisation culture and consider the impending changes in CI that were to be further explored in the next fieldwork phase. While the following empirical chapters will

consider the co-existent realities of these changes across the layers of HAX, from multiple viewpoints, this sections aims to provide an overview of key developments and incidents as a background to the ensuing chapters.

Figure 5-2: HAX – Senior Executive Team and Group Asset Directorate



Source: Structure Charts, HAX, 2009

5.3.1. Strategy and Restructuring

Even from the earliest engagement with HAX, a strong focus on the strategy-making process was evident with corporate objectives, strategic goals and threads linking group centre strategies with corporate planning at all levels of management across the operating companies and subsidiaries. As evident in this chapter, key players at the organisation did also acknowledge the impact of

external drivers such as the regulatory debate and recessionary pressures on the broader strategic direction of the housing association. For the case study research 'strategy' seemed an appropriate focus to explore the external and internal stimuli on the case study organisation (particularly in a dynamic post-merger context that the organisation itself was located) and to track the trajectory of key changes and choices at HAX over the course of the case study.

A key strategic development at HAX was its restructuring programme and the case being made to the governing Boards by the senior Executive team was a dominant theme in early scoping fieldwork.

Impacts on the staffing structure were significant. Although the final numbers of redundancies were less than 45, the process whereby all staff had to re-interview for their same or equivalent positions meant that the time was fraught with uncertainty. Out of the approximately 900 positions the new streamlined structure provided for, over 700 had to be filled competitively through the Human Resource department at HAX. Senior positions such as executives and Board members were not re-applied for but had to be legitimised through external consultants.

The staffing structure was designed in a hierarchical framework with 6 or 7 levels of management from the CEO to frontline housing officers. Appointments were confirmed in a top-down approach with directors appointed first and the tasked with appointing their heads of service, who then had to appoint their own teams. The Human Resource Director at HAX at the time, acknowledged that

the strongly hierarchical structure could leave some *“employees feeling that their jobs had been downgraded because of the removal of autonomy”* under more direct management from senior executives.

5.3.2. Organisational culture and sub-cultures

The author's first impressions of HAX, which will be reinforced in the following chapters, were that the organisations had a strong corporate outlook, driven by a business-oriented group executive leadership, with clear cultural variations vertically and horizontally across the management hierarchy as well as the geographical stretch of the organisation. Sub-cultures and tensions had also emerged as a critical issue in the post-merger operating companies within the organisation, bringing together different companies with different heritage and cultures from across England. A wide perception across senior management, endorsed by front-line staff was that that post-merger cultural fit had not been achieved, and the organisation was working toward identifying an ideal culture and trying to develop more of a cultural homogeneity within the organisation. Culture and sub-cultures as a way of exploring the changing identity of HAX and how that identity was manifested in new ways of managing CI, were also therefore an appropriate research focus for this qualitative study.

A culture survey by an external consultant at HAX, attempted to capture the changing values at HAX and investigate how the separate sub-cultures of the operating companies had evolved since had come together under the umbrella

of the HAX group. The quantitative survey showed improvements in the “effective management of implementing change” with OPCO2 described as having the strongest culture. Findings were also that ‘innovation’ as a value was not strongly promoted at HAX (Culture Survey, HAX, 2008b). Executives felt that this reflected tensions between control and innovation and that “the problem with innovation is that as the organisation gets bigger, we get more cautious as there is more to lose.”

5.3.3. Community Investment (CI)

At the preliminary fieldwork stage at HAX, it became evident immediately that there was a significant variance across the organisation as to what constitutes CI and how it should be framed. At the Group Executive level there was definitely a strong sense of financial and corporate purpose with the core function of HAX seen to be providing and managing affordable housing. Community support services were more often regarded as discretionary, part of a broader Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and appropriate where they complemented some of the financial or strategic aims of the organization. Further down the management hierarchy there was a greater emphasis of the organisation’s role and responsibilities to the wider community. At the same time within the senior executive team there was a growing acknowledgement of the imbalance between a dominant financial purpose and efficiency agenda, and shortcomings in providing the ‘softer stuff’ such as CI. Locally more dispersed, sporadic services were being provided but with inconsistencies,

duplication and inefficiencies according to senior management. CI was becoming more important as the financially secure HAX aspired to develop its 'softer, feel-good' areas, necessary to be a key player in the industry, so in effect 'playing catch-up' with the rest of the sector. A proposed increased scale of CI was also used as a bargaining tool in restructuring negotiations with internal boards and over the course of the study, the regional CI teams were rationalised into a new centralised CI department. The new centralised CI team were to give a strategic focus and consistency to previously localised, ad hoc services. The changes in the strategic direction of CI at HAX, its link to questions about accountability, identity and the core role of HAs as reflected in the multi-layered views of the organisation, made it a relevant and appropriate focus for exploring links between strategy and organisational culture.

'CSR' was also emerging as part of the management rhetoric at HAX, in communication with employees (Re:View, April 2008) and as a potential positive, tangible outcome of the proposed structural changes, and how this would actually play out on the frontline of community engagement. While a social regulatory contract more typical of public sector services government might be rejected by the leadership of this organisation as it would be perceived as the government 'calling the shots' according to its own social priorities, there appeared to be more of a strategic fit between the current business focus and efficiency agenda, and CSR. Furthermore the organisation would be deciding its own terms of engagement with local communities.

5.4. Policy Debate and Organisational Identity

As Chapter 2 described, the months preceding the Housing and Regeneration Act in July 2008, were fraught with industry debate on the future regulatory regime for the HA sector which was reflected in the evidence presented to the Cave Review (DCLG, 2007). As a large HA, with a key strategic objective of increasing its influence, this debate was also very much on the agenda at HAX. The organisation's relationship with and view of regulatory bodies at the time such as the Housing Corporation (HC) and the Audit Commission (AC) were a recurring topic in scoping interviews at HAX.

In response to proposals outlined in the Housing Bill which were deemed to threaten the independence of HAS (NHF, 2008c), the Housing Futures Network published a report on their views or position on HA regulation. This network was made up of the largest 8 HAs in the UK, including HAX which expressed a strong voice in the network. Collectively these organisations held assets of over £10.5 billion and managed more than 250 000 properties, with an annual turnover together of over £1 billion (Housing Futures Network, 2008).

The report considered new directions for social housing, affirming the existing formal accountability mechanisms that protect stakeholder interests, which included:

- Regulation and inspection which governed the relationship between HAs and the government thereby ensuring a level of accountability to residents for service quality.

- Loan agreements which state accountability to lenders.
- Accountability to local authorities through nomination agreements and other local contractual and non-contractual agreements.

According to the report,

Taken together, these mechanisms provide a broad model of social accountability and the idea that housing associations are less accountable than the vast majority of other private or quasi-private organisations is wrong. In fact, the opposite looks true.

(Housing Futures Network, 2008, p.19)

A recurring theme in the report is the desire to clarify the nature of HAs' wider community role:

"Re-establishing this unique position for housing associations means our relationship with the state as funder and our relationship with local authorities as local housing and community service providers needs to change. Local authorities should remain the key strategic local organisations. They have statutory powers and duties that housing associations and the private sector cannot replicate. The housing association role should be about delivery of homes and services via clear contractual arrangements with the state and other local partners.

(Housing Futures Network, 2008, p.12)

Finally, the report summarises four key elements of change needed to enable HAs to deliver on their housing and wider services:

- Redefining of the purpose of, and restructuring access to, state subsidised housing
- Creating and delivering of new housing and financing products
- A clear recognition of the value of housing association independence and a pragmatic approach to legitimate accountability requirements
- An outcomes-focused regulatory system which allows the flexibilities and freedoms needed for effective delivery into neighbourhoods

(Housing Futures Network, 2008)

5.5. Impact of The Credit Crunch And Recession

During the scoping period of fieldwork and consequently in the main fieldwork stage interviews, the ‘credit crunch’ and economic recession that grew in momentum from around September 2008, was a dominant emerging theme.

In Chapter 2, the credit crunch and economic slowdown was shown as having a profound impact on the operations and strategic management of HAs, and HAX was not an exception. Being a large, relatively financially robust HA, it had a specific reaction to changing economic conditions as compared to more of the general implications for the HA sector as discussed in Chapter 3. The various effects of the credit crunch and economic slowdown, as manifested in strategic and operational management approaches, are described below.

5.5.1. Cost Management, Financial Capacity and Impairment

Great emphasis was placed on the recessionary pressure for cost management, with an 'Intense focus on what money is now spent on' (B4: Senior Executive, December 2008). An attitude of prudence and risk aversion was also being adopted. Because of the impairment factor (the value of existing assets affected by falling house prices) costly repairs were limited. Indeed the market downturn has increased the focus on how impairment, that is the loss of values of land and unsold stock at HAX, was reported and quantified in its accounts. HAX also took the opportunity to issue a Bond to create further financial capacity and reduce dependence on bank loans, which were vulnerable to re-pricing risk as banks sought opportunities to enhance their own viability by creative monitoring of covenants to penalise 'default events'.

5.5.2. Cross-Subsidy Model

While much of the social housing sector was reliant on the cross subsidy model, HAX does not have a great volume of shared ownership (about 15% of its total stock) which was felt to be manageable. The market slowdown though and consequent fall in low cost home ownership sales has left the executive management at HAX considering whether there was room for diversification in the short-term from the two core rent offers in the housing market which was aimed at two extremes – the disadvantaged/poor and the private sector. The

question was raised as to whether and how a middle gap in the market might exist for intermediate or private affordable renting, through modelling the scenario using 'off the shelf purchases' from developers. This strategy was seen as promising in that it would avoid impairment problems at HAX in that the value of the new stock would be based on its rental yield or income stream rather than its reduced asset value in a depressed housing market.

Medium to long-term though, the cross subsidy model was still seen to an essential feature of their business plan, which suggests seemed to suggest that the model was temporarily suspended rather than broken. The Development team at HAX were expecting to restart land acquisition and initiating affordable housing products by the end of 2009, thereby reintroducing the cross subsidy model.

With regard to the sector's long-term viability, demand for affordable rented homes remained high. Indeed a senior executive at HAX reflected that in spite of adverse market conditions, *'A significant proportion of our customers are already poor.....we are supplying a product in high demand and poor supply'* (December 2008).

5.5.3. New Development and Stock Maintenance

It was felt at HAX that its development schemes were exposed to a tolerable risk. The organisation has a greater shared ownership programme than outright sales, and with new developments being reduced, they didn't feel that they had as big an unsold stock problem compared to other HAs.

The difficulty of doing new business in a declining market was identified, particularly with regard to predicting housing values. HAX was therefore adopting a conservative business plan with tough appraisal assumptions to manage these risks. (Development Director, December 2008). Annual grant bids for 2008-2011 had accordingly been reduced to a third of 2006/08 levels. An Interim 3 year development strategy was being developed to consider re-entering the market at the right time, addressing the shortfall in affordable housing and trying to balance a conservative, risk averse position while taking advantage of opportunities in the market. In terms of a socially responsible green agenda, improving existing old stock to the same environmental standard was seen as necessary but also very costly in the current economic conditions, so a slower programme of repairs would be implemented.

5.5.4. Relationship with Private Developers

Prior to the credit crunch, private developers had been viewed as competition for HAs, able to apply for grant funding without being under the same regulatory demands as HAs. Since the credit crunch and housing industry slowdown,

developers had been badly affected and consequently looked to sell off large quantities of new-build properties. HAX was being offered 'quality', family-sized 3 and 4 bedroom houses at bargain prices. It was felt that one of the positives of the market downturn was that large, financially secure HAs (like HAX) were in a stronger position to take advantage of the cost-priced stock from developers, particularly since 'off-the-shelf' purchases were regarded as more flexible with a lower risk than HAX building their own. The strategy adopted at HAX was to buy 'quality not volume.' (Development Director, December 2008).

5.5.5. Reduced Merger Activity

As discussed in Chapter 2, due to risk aversion, and the certainty of banks renegotiating the terms of any debt at less favourable rates had reduced merger activity in the sector. Senior executives at HAX felt however that given the opportunity, about 5 or 6 large, financially stable HAs (HAX being one of them) could be in a position to take over failing small or medium sized HAs. Over the course of the research this possibility was not further explored, nor were any smaller HAs identified for possible mergers with HAX.

5.5.6. Governance and Structure

In 2008 HAX first proposed a restructuring programme to collapse its various operating companies into one streamlined organisation, in order to make

efficiency savings and run the organisation more efficiently. The CI programme at HAX was also tied in to this restructuring programme as an incentive and perceived positive outcome. Due to a number of reasons this plan was not adopted, one of which was the lack of complete support by the various operating company Boards. However for the executive team, the key explanation given for not continuing with the plan was that a legal amalgamation would require HAX to renegotiate their terms of debt with the banks, something they were unwilling to do given they had secured favourable fixed interest rates prior to the credit crunch.

5.5.7. Community Investment

Despite not going ahead with a legal amalgamation, the organisation still initiated a centralised CI directorate team to develop and implement a cohesive CI strategy across the group. But in a financially constricted climate with limited resources there seems to be an even greater need for a strong business case for CI. According to a senior director (January 2009) the recession meant having to justify, more than ever, money spent on CI and questioning the value of its return or the social dividend. Due to a financially constricted market with limited resources, an even stronger business case needs to be made for CI.

As Chapter 7 will describe in further detail, one of the three CI themes identified at the organisation was that of Training and Employment. This was seen as having a commercial rationale in protecting HAX's revenue or rent stream in the

in the context of a recession with increased unemployment and pressure on the social welfare system. Likewise creating vibrant communities makes business sense as it improved 'letability' of properties and added value to the organisation. (Group Commercial Director, January 2009).

5.6. Conclusion

Having discussed the research methodology and fieldwork design in the previous chapter the purpose of this chapter is to provide a background to the case study organisation HAX to help inform the empirical findings and analysis of the following chapters. In the research cycle (Figure 5-1) this stage is located as Case Profile and Preliminary Fieldwork which reflects the dual purpose of this chapter, that is to provide a background description of the case study organisation and also an overview of the early scoping fieldwork that helped inform the direction of the research project in parallel with the sector analysis and theory mapping stages.

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The data from this period of the project has been dealt with as background or preliminary evidence to the main body of multi-layered evidence presented in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. Sections 5.3. and 5.4. highlight the findings of this scoping work as well as overview of the changes taking place at the organisation , reflected as both internal changes at the organisation as well as the strategic impacts of external sector-level drivers. These are preceded in section 5.2. by a history and profile of the case study organisation HAX.

Finally, Section 5.5. serves as a conclusion and summary of how the issues emerging from the early engagement at HAX led to questions around the changing organisational culture and the dominant logics shaping the organisation's CI strategy.

Of course, external trends and drivers do not always have a fixed starting point on a timeline, and likewise critical incidents at an organisation to not spontaneously occur at a given moment in a vacuum of previous activity. Therefore, while this chapter was broadly intended to provide a background profile of HAX, and build a picture of the organisation through multiple sources including early empirical evidence from the scoping period, it is not has not artificially attempted to delineate the evidence in pre –October 2008 and a post-October 2008 categories³². Likewise some internal reports and other documentary evidence that may have been produced at HAX after October 2008, with clear relevance and critical to understanding the main themes of this study, are referred to in both this Chapter and the subsequent ones.

³² October 2008, being the end of the scoping period and the start of the designed intensive fieldwork phase. See Chapter 4 for further detail.

Furthermore, in the interest of protecting the anonymity of HAX and the research participants of this study, the facts and figures provided in this chapter and particularly in Section 5.2, have been aggregated and blurred where appropriate.

CHAPTER 6:

CASE STUDY FINDINGS- LAYERS 1 AND 2: GOVERNING BOARDS AND EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT

6.1. Introduction

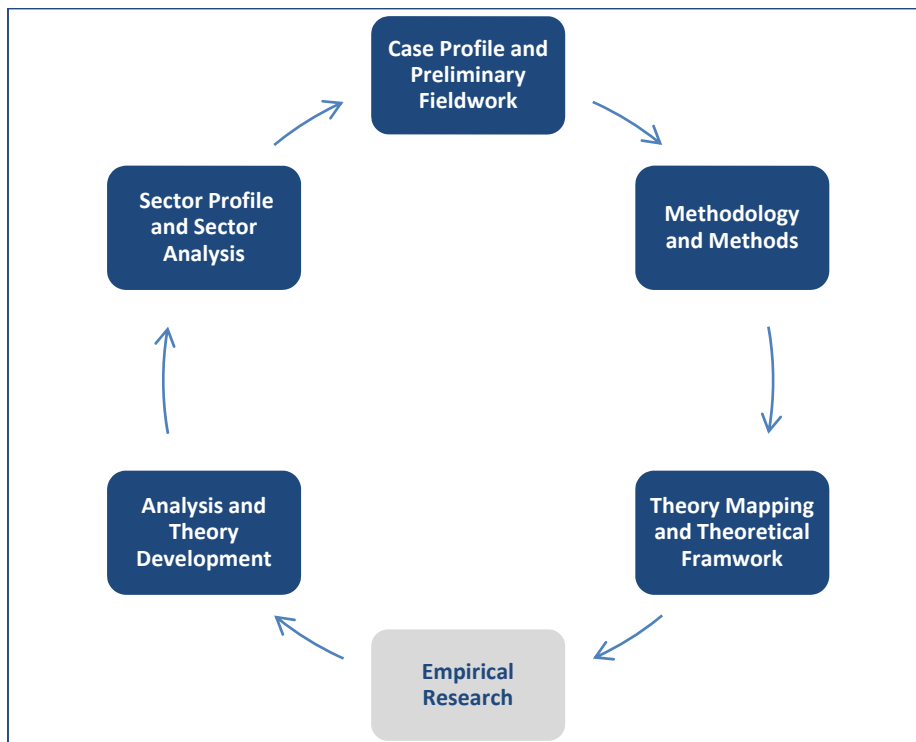
Chapter 6, as well as the following Chapters 7 and 8 present the multi-layered empirical findings of this case study research, as indicated in Figure 6.1. These three chapters have a similar structure in considering the research findings for each layer in the broad categories of strategy, culture and logics. The findings capture the views of participants on the strategic developments at HAX broadly and more specifically on the changing role of CI, the evolving organisational culture and the rationale behind these changes. The findings also reflect the author's understanding and analysis of the each of these layers, where participants influenced and were influenced by the emergent strategic direction of CI, the values and identity characterising these layers, and the logics underpinning strategic decision-making.

In this chapter participant views from the top echelons of management and governance are explored. Table 6 – 1 is a reminder of the subject of Layer 1 and Layer 2, as well as the research methods employed and the author's level of engagement with these research participants.³³ While this table provides information on the positions of these executives, for the purposes of protecting

³³ See Table 4 – 4 in Chapter 4 for the research design of all 5 layers, as well as Table 4 -5 for a detailed fieldwork schedule.

the anonymity of these participants in the chapter they are referenced as either ‘executive’ or ‘director’, and according to their assigned code.³⁴

Figure 6-1: Research Cycle: Methodology and Methods



Source: The Author (2010)

6.2. Layer 1: Governing Boards

6.2.1. Strategy:

The ultimate responsibility of governance and the auditing of HAX’s financial performance lay with the Group Board and Operating Company Boards. Over the duration of the project the key tensions in strategic decision-making and corporate objectives were between a management drive for an efficient

³⁴ See Table 4-5 for coded list of participants

rationalisation of the operating companies (by collapsing the entities into one organisation) and reluctance on the part of some Board members to change the status quo.

Table 6-1: Layers 1 and 2 of the HAX Case Study

	LAYER 1	LAYER 2
Research Subject	Non- executive/ independent members of Group and Operating Company Boards.	Senior Executive Team and Senior/ Head Office Management:
Research Methods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Documentary analysis</u> of Chairman's reports and internal documents 2. <u>Semi-structured interviews</u> with 3 board members 3. <u>Observation and Participant Observation</u> of Organisational behaviour at head office as well as Board and Tenant 'away day' workshop. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Documentary analysis</u> of Senior Executive reports, Internal documents and minutes of meetings; Publications, press releases, marketing sources; Financial and performance data 2. <u>Semi-structured Interviews</u> with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Chief Executive • -Special Projects Director • -Human Resources Director • -Marketing Director • -Operating Company Chief Executive/ -Group Commercial Director • -Operating Company Chief Executive/ Housing Director 3. <u>Focus Group Discussions</u> with the _Task team created to manage organisational restructure 4. <u>Observation and Participant Observation</u> of organisational behaviour at Head Office and attending Managers Briefing Meetings

Frequency	6 monthly intervals	3 – 4 monthly intervals
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Source: The Author (2008)

An externally-contracted report on the possible benefits of an intra-group amalgamation was presented to the Boards, and highlighted as a significant advantage the increased investment which could be made to CI as a consequence of potential efficiency savings. Although some Board members were less convinced about the need for the restructure of the organisation, there was some acknowledgment of its inevitability as part of a drive towards a more efficient business. The argument for amalgamation was made so well by the executive team that Board members felt that resisting the changes would be akin to denying tenants a multi-million pound bonus in the form of efficiency savings.

With regard to the core service provided by HAX, Board members felt that the provision and maintenance of Decent Homes was essential, but in terms of CI, addressing anti-social behaviour was seen to be very important. More emphasis was placed on Resident Involvement (RI) and accountability to tenants than on CI

6.2.2. Culture:

Within the governing Boards different cultures were evident, reflecting the various backgrounds of the individual members and the operating company they presided over. It was felt to some extent that the more open, welcoming and inclusive culture of one of the operating companies, OPCO3, was being subsumed by HAX's corporate business culture.

Furthermore, an interviewee who had been on both a regional and the Group Board, felt that while in the operating company Board there was an opportunity to tour estates and feel the real impact of decision-making, in the Group Board they felt a lack of connection from tenants and communities. Tensions regarding the proposed restructure highlighted some of the different visions of the HAX held by different parts of the organisation and the feeling was that the Group Board and Senior Executive Team were not working as one group or in the same language.

Added to this were apparent clashes of personality and tensions regarding governance in general and succession on Boards. Some members of the Group Board were “*starting to feel like a useless commodity.*” (A1, Board Member)

With regard to the amalgamation of the operating companies, operating company board members reluctantly acknowledged that their roles would become redundant, although at the same time emphasising the point that it was still these Board members who were looking after the best interest and history of the individual operating companies.

6.2.3. Institutional Logics:

As could be expected a commercial logic was more dominant in the more strategic HAX Group Board. Because of the business orientation, CI was not debated at the Group Board level, although it was felt that there was actually scope for non-financial matters to be debated too.

The growing corporate feel and entrepreneurial focus at HAX was described as

“A corporate set up with players in an entrepreneurial game.”

(A1, Board Member)

It was pointed out that since HAX received direct public grant funding it was not entirely appropriate to be considering themselves akin to private enterprises.

A common definition of CI and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was thought to be lacking, and a CSR training event for the group and operating company Board Members organised by HAX was thought to have been inappropriate and pitched at the wrong level for the majority of attendees who were tenants.

6.3. Layer 2: Executive and Senior Management

6.3.1. Strategy:

At the Senior Executive level there was a defined and strong sense of financial and corporate purpose with the core function of HAX seen to be providing and managing affordable housing. Community support services were more often regarded as discretionary, part of a broader Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and appropriate where they complemented some of the financial or strategic aims of the organization. At the same time within the senior executive team there was a growing acknowledgement of the imbalance between a dominant financial purpose and efficiency agenda, and “*shortcomings in providing the softer stuff like CI*” (B2, Senior Executive). Locally more dispersed, sporadic services were being provided but with inconsistencies, duplication and inefficiencies. CI was becoming more important as the financially secure HAX aspired to develop its “*softer, feel-good areas, necessary to be a key player in the industry*” and so in effect “*playing catch-up with the rest of the sector*” (B2, Senior Executive). It was felt that CI had not developed on par with some of the other organisational strengths such as its housing management and continuing financial stability, as

“HAX had instead rested on our laurels and missed an opportunity to be strong in CI.” (B3, Senior Executive)

CI could be a way to add value to the organisation as a main player in the sector.

Interestingly the proposal for centralising CI was put together by some senior executives about 9 months prior to the agreed structure and was not approved, as it was seen it was purely about increasing CI activity without links to any other corporate objectives. A later proposal linked to streamlining the organisation was developed and approved as part of the rationalisation strategy. The balance of executives felt that this became more acceptable because of the resources from the efficiency savings that would be gained from the amalgamation of its operating companies. This position was reinforced by an external consultation which recommended this amalgamation on the basis of an increased spend in CI.

Of course the restructure was not simply about CI and efficiency savings. The frustration of having different technologies across different parts of the organisation was a recurrent theme on the need for consolidating IT. A broader argument was developed around the need for being a leaner, more streamlined organisation, would be 'fit for purpose' and be able to better to a changing sector. The case was made for the amalgamation of HAX's operational entities to secure tender and procurement advantages, and also for a more competitive asset management strategy across its operating companies as a whole, so that for instance an asset rich association could subsidise another association with opportunities for growth and development in a different part of the country. Overall a more simplified organisational structure was about creating a

consistency of service offer at the same time as the business drivers for simplifying were increasing capacities and creating efficiencies.

So in addition to these, perhaps less appreciated arguments, the proposed increased scale of CI was used as a bargaining tool in restructuring negotiations with internal boards and over the course of the study, the regional CI teams were rationalised into a new centralised CI department. The new centralised CI team were to give a strategic focus and consistency to previously localised, ad hoc services. According to a senior executive CI needed to have *“a coherent strategy since its purpose is not just to feel good about ourselves.”* (B5, Director).

It wasn't deemed possible to *“do everything or have a ‘free for all’* (B2, Senior Executive) when it came to providing CI services. Despite a source of concern being the continuous retreat of the public sector in providing community services, the focus of HAX's group CI strategy was still centred on government agenda and funding streams relating to financial inclusion, employment, and health and well-being schemes. At the same time though a stronger national strategic vision for CI would be more effective than some local partnerships and area based initiatives which were regarded as 'talking shops' with not always the most productive outcomes.

Within HAX in general, and specifically at the new CI department, there was a desire to move as quickly as possible through the restructure to reduce uncertainty, but at the same time trying to be co-ordinated too. The staffing

restructure was planned in tiers from top down, so that executive managers appointed directors who appointed their own teams.

Interestingly CI was located within a broader Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) division, despite, as was the case at Board level, a lack of common understanding of what CSR was about and whether it was relevant in a housing association context. Nevertheless senior members of the marketing team were trying to tie in and co-ordinate the various threads of CSR of which CI was one, but this had a limited value at the organisation and by the end of the fieldwork period there was still an acknowledgement that these links were not yet convincing.

On the marketing side, a new strategy was also developed to refresh the brand and a new unified brand was launched towards the end of the fieldwork period. The executive body hoped to articulate a constant vision that would be related to both heritage and innovation that all the operating company brands could comfortably adopt. The new vision was about “*embodying existing values, the ones we believe in rather than starting from scratch.*” (B5, Senior Executive)

While the marketing strategy was developed to promote one new unified organisation, legally HAX was still a parent body with its operating associations as separate legal entities. Because of conditions in the finance markets relating to the renegotiation of lending terms, and the continued resistance from the company Boards, a detailed restructure and operational centralisation strategy was developed without plans for a legal amalgamation of HAX’s operating

companies. Executives described the plan as a compromise rather than an optimum solution, putting HAX in a better-than-hoped for, but still not ideal, position. Reflecting on the restructure, some felt that the process could have been faster and bolder

On the positive side, with all the enormous changes taking place at HAX, the executive management had expected operational performance to drop but it has held up very well instead.

6.3.2. Culture:

A common perception held by senior management was that that a cultural fit across the operating companies (which had come together in a group structure in a series of mergers before the start of this research project) had not been immediately achieved, and, with the help of an some external consulting work on culture and identity, the organisation was working toward identifying an ideal culture. The cultural vision was about homogeneity within the organisation as it was *“not acceptable to have separate cultures in the future.”*(B4, Director) An 80/ 20 ratio of centralised services to decentralised services should be echoed by the organisational culture:

“....it’s about identifying what we want culture to be, what kind of people we want....we want a homogenous culture but 80% homogenous and 20% bespoke” (B3, Senior Executive)

Culture was about managing organisational change and risk and creating a unity of purpose. The group centre executive regarded itself as having a cohesive culture, with a mandate for strong leadership so as to leave behind an enduring legacy at HAX. Internal communication with the rest of the organisation was about creating a single identity and trying to define what HAX was about. It was perceived that the staff and tenants of HAX understood the rationale behind key strategic decisions, but that governing Boards were more resistant to some of the progressive changes, which seemed to suggest a lack of commitment to the organisation. The executive management felt that they were changing the organisational culture from one of confidentiality to a new culture of transparency.

Externally, according to members of the senior executive team, HAX was trying to move away from the still pervasive, *“old culture of entitlement and altruism”* (B2, Senior Executive) to a more action-based, faster paced approach (that was already prevalent at OPCO2). At this level of management, there was a desire to move away from a more traditional paternalistic engagement with tenants - *“Everyone would like a service where staff are waiting for leaves to fall off trees to catch them”* (B2, Senior Executive)- to a more realistic and financially viable customer service model which was about both the rights and responsibilities of tenants, and managing expectations for customer satisfaction, which was seen to surpass industry and private sector standards. High satisfaction rates (of over 90%) from tenants meant that the organisation was exceeding its obligations to tenants (B4, Director).

Building a new unified identity was critical to the senior team, who were trying to reinforce a sense of one organisation working together, and what HAX stood for, and building the momentum for one organisation. Some of the challenges in doing this were convincing the operating company brands. An all-managers' conference was put together by the marketing department to try to bring all staff together.

While there was good feedback on internal communication with staff, there was still an acknowledgment that "*management needs win hearts and minds at HAX*" (B4, Director). Internal communication took the form of staff newsletters and an online weekly forum. With the first newsletters communication was perceived as very good which executives regarded as indicative of people's expectation of communication. However once some redundancies were made of senior people not retaining posts feedback from internal communication was not as positive.

The location of CI within a broader CSR framework raised interesting questions about the identity and vision at HAX. Some members of the executive team felt that CI and CSR were disjointed and not a natural fit, while others saw CSR as an appropriate link between HAX and the private sector, particularly with its membership at a high profile CSR trade body. This tied in with what executives regarded as their role and one of the corporate goals at HAX to increase the organisation's influence externally in the market place. The adoption of a private sector social responsibility model reflects the professional, business orientated culture that senior executives endorsed.

The executive team also saw their role about creating a positive culture or mood within the organisation. Reflecting on a recent culture survey, executives conceded that the larger an organisation like HAX grew the more risk-averse and therefore less innovative it would become. The notion of control versus innovation was related to the balance between freedom and consistency (such as stability and common policy and procedure). Overall when comparing the findings of this survey with a similar one conducted 3 years previously, executives were pleased with the improvement in results that showed effective management in implementing changes at HAX. The findings also reinforced executive opinion that OPCO1 had the strongest culture while OPCO3 had the most focus on customer service. The role of executives was identified as 'visionary stakeholders' (HAX Culture Survey, 2008) - identifying priorities for the organisation.

6.3.3. Institutional Logics:

The restructuring of the CI department at HAX was part of a business logic and efficiency drive for streamlining, increasing capacity and capturing the best standards across its operating companies. By "*streamlining decision-making to be nimble and agile*" (B4, Director), HAX would be able to respond faster to opportunities in the sector. If it had not centralised and moved beyond the regional delivery of service senior management felt that HAX would have missed out on accessing crucial government and EU funding. Efficiency was

also about capacity-building, wasting less and cutting out duplication. For instance it was seen as *'bizarre'* to have a coherent group portfolio management strategy in the context of the financial limits of each operating company (B2, Senior Executive). In IT practices it made no sense to have four sets of accounts, audits and fees which just overlaid a degree of complexity. The quest for a consistent offer for tenants or customers was also a key theme driving strategic thinking around the restructuring programme, and was seen also as responding to the expectations of the regulator at the time (with group inspections by the Audit Commission frequently criticising 'lack of consistency' as a problem).

As a 'business for social purpose' it was imperative to maintain a strong balance sheet, and focus on the things that mattered first, that is financial viability, governance and *'an appropriate standard of service for residents'* (B5, Director). Everything else, including CI, was regarded as discretionary or an embellishment, rather than something HAX was compelled to do. Indeed senior executives with a non-housing background found the ambiguity around CI rather puzzling, contending that there shouldn't be a need to provide anything other than the core service of social housing.

Senior executives also argued that there was a limit to how much could be invested in a product, especially a product that was not price sensitive, and where customer service standards apparently exceeded market equivalents. Regarding the relationship between HAX and its tenants, a consumer model was deemed appropriate, while the idea of 'quasi-ownership' was rejected as

more relevant to a council housing ethos. The underlying logic presented by executive management was that:

“We are independent organisations providing housing under contract to consumers.” (B2, Senior Executive)

The new centralised CI department was located within a CSR division in a Business/ Commercial directorate within HAX. It was within this layer, that is the most senior management level of the organisation, that the concept of CSR had the most credibility as an appropriate framework for CI since a *“lot of what we do is already socially responsible.”*(B4, Director). Accordingly HAX’s membership of a predominantly private sector CSR body, as described earlier, was seen to be a positive move for the association and provided the opportunity for networking with the private sector. For those that supported a CSR strategy felt that *“it gives community investment a hard edge rather than just being about woolly philanthropy”* (B2, Senior Executive).

The other components of a CSR framework namely through Employee Relations and Environmentalism were also considered. For the former it was felt that this could be about staff giving back to the community, but that inherently at a social housing organisation people are vocationally driven by the work they do. On the environmental side, a specific person was appointed and tasked with doing a ‘green review’ of HAX and broadening the impact of environmental issues on strategic planning at HAX.

Executives at HAX felt that HAs were now big complex organisations, similar to FSTE100 companies and should be managed accordingly. While support for a CSR framework did become more diluted over the course of the research, the underlying commercial rationale did prevail in this layer of the organisation. It was felt that CI should be done in a business-like way, making communities more attractive as a sound business plan:

“It is in our interest for our communities to be successful.” (B5, Director)

While it was possible to *“become ‘sentimental’ about CI at a local level”* (B3, Senior Executive), more strategic focus was needed. An executive gave the example of sponsoring a local football team being a worthy but not a strategic service. What was needed were *“boundaries around what we will and will not do”* (B3, Senior Executive). Furthermore, while the new housing regulator was promoting a communities agenda, the strategic framework for CI needed to be defined by HAX and not imposed on the organisation. According to executives, a debate was required to challenge the lack of clarity about who is responsible for the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of communities. There were tensions between the rights and responsibilities of HAs, and concern over what was seen as the passporting of public realm services onto social landlords. There was a growing perception that local authorities would like HAs to take on even more responsibility for providing social welfare services. Questions were raised about what the purpose of state intervention was, what products should social housing providers offer and how should the ‘grey area’ be regulated.

The debate around local government pressures to provide community services and the threat of regulation of these activities can be contrasted with the business logic behind adopting a model of tenants as customers as favoured by the executive management at HAX. Senior executives felt strongly in favour of a consumerist rather than a collectivist view of social housing:

“We have a strong voice about consumerism- our residents are customers.”

(B2, Senior Executive)

According to executives, the main obligations HAX had to its tenants were meeting its tenancy agreements, and the mood about being accountable to residents was created by being dragged into the public sector. There was an acknowledgement that further discussion was needed on the residents and accountability issue, the role of localism within the new structure, and modernising Resident Involvement (RI) activities. While different RI structures were being considered at the time of the fieldwork, the executive position was that they would like to have working groups advising central teams rather than officiating committees since most of spending done by HAX was not discretionary.

In the end the senior executive team were confident about fulfilling their remit as a ‘social business’ (HAX, 2008b) with the new CI structure. It was felt that a great effort was consciously made to do more with the central CI team and its

increased budget, by focusing on core strategic themes. By tracking efficiencies and with allocated surpluses, HAX was creating a capacity for more CI, and more strategic CI activity. Additionally, by starting to develop scorecards and measurement tools to analyse the rate of return on CI “*HAX could be philanthropic but still commercial*” (B5, Director).

6.4. Conclusion

This chapter has reflected on the empirical findings of the first two layers of this multi-layered study, considering the changing strategic management at HAX and in particular the new strategic vision of CI, the change in organisational culture it reflects and the logics behind this new vision. The discussion in Chapter 9 synthesising the findings from all 5 layers of this study, is ultimately the concluding note to the findings presented here. Without pre-empting that discussion, this chapter has already revealed different views of the same organisation from the perspectives explored. The first of these perspectives, the Board level, suggests that there were some tensions regarding the restructuring programme at HAX, while the proposed increase in CI budget and level of activity as an outcome put pressure on Board to concede in favour of the restructuring programme. The second layer, that is the executive perspective, was characterised by a corporate business culture and a strong commercial and efficiency logic underpinning strategic decision-making. CI was a prime example of this, where a perceived un-strategic and inconsistent service would be

centralised and made efficient to provide a standardised offer to customers as per the executive team's more consumerist approach. A unified vision and identity of HAX could also be realised with a more homogenous organisational culture.

Some strong themes emerging from these first two layers were therefore about structure and identity, old and new values, leadership and communication, and efficiency and accountability. These key themes also emerge in the research findings from the third layer of this case study, which is the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 7:
CASE STUDY FINDINGS- LAYER 3: COMMUNITY
INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT

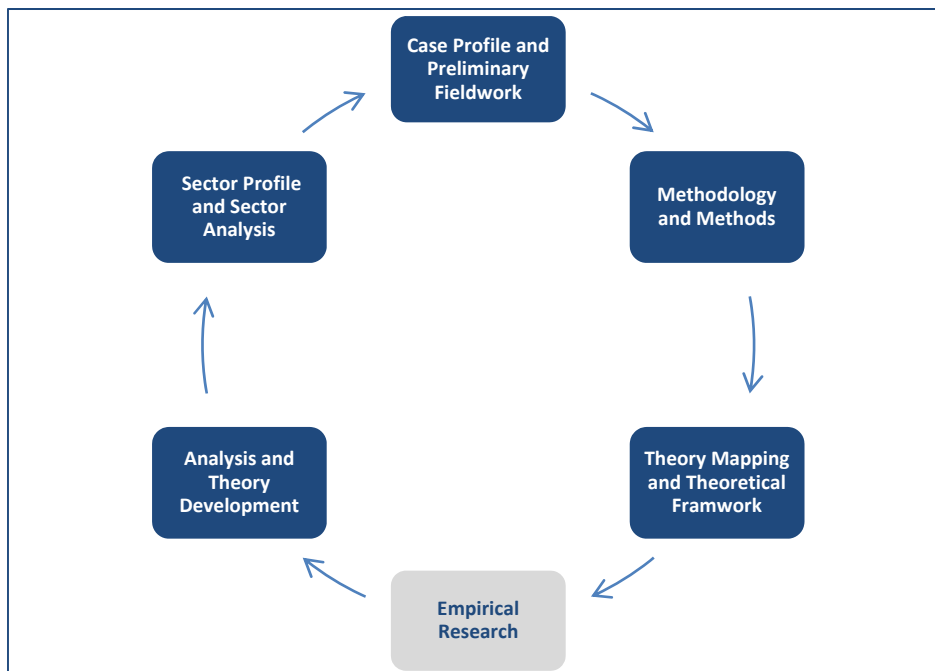
7.1. Introduction

Continuing with the layered exposition of case study findings that is the empirical component of this study (See Figure 7-1), this chapter considers changes in the strategic management of Community Investment (CI) at HAX from the perspective of CI directors and managers. This layer is particularly useful as it focuses on the core themes of this research enquiry and also because of the extensive period of fieldwork, presents views from the pre-centralised regional CI management, as well the new centralised CI department. As Chapter 5 described, in the process of restructuring at HAX, the regional functions of CI were collapsed into a single department under a new CI director, and 3 heads of service. As Table 7 –I indicates the heads of CI at OPCO1, 2 and 3 respectively were all interviewed, as well as the new CI director and his 3 Heads of Service. As was the case in the previous chapter, because of these few unique positions, these participants would be clearly identifiable within HAX by their job title. In this chapter therefore the author had to take care to protect the identity of these participants, and not to assign job titles that were similar at all to the actual ones held by these participants particularly where verbatim is used. While interviews with one of the departing regional CI managers, as well as with the new CI director were particularly

interesting, with both participants expressing strong and eloquent views regarding their vision of HAX and the role CI had to fulfil within that vision, their contribution cannot be directly assigned to them for the sake of protecting their anonymity. Making these ethical decisions and reflecting on them is of course part of the ontological framework for this research, as discussed in Chapter 4.

In this chapter, job titles have therefore been blurred to a generic CI manager (or officer), with the only distinction being made between regional and central departments. While this will not directly capture the views of influential individuals such as the CI director, the findings nevertheless do still present a coherent narrative about the changing management of CI at HAX and the shifts in culture and logics underlying these changes.

Figure 7-1: Research Cycle: Methodology and Methods



Source: The Author (2010)

Table 7-1: Layer 3 of the HAX Case Study

	LAYER 3A	LAYER 3B
Research Subject	Community Investment Management- Regional Teams	Community Investment Management - Central Directorate and Team
Research Methods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Documentary Analysis</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes of meetings <u>Semi-structured Interviews</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directors or Managers of CI at operating companies (at regional offices/ community centres) <u>Observation</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational behaviour at Regional and Head offices Meetings with local authority/ sector partners on collaborative issues 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Documentary Analysis</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Reports Strategy Documents <u>Semi-structured Interviews.</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director of new centralised CI department Heads of Service within centralised Community Investment Department <u>Observation and participant observation</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational behaviour at Regional and Head offices Meetings with sector partners on collaborative issues
Frequency	Every 3- 4 months	Every 3 -4 months

7.2. Regional Community Investment Management

7.2.1. Strategy:

Prior to the restructure programme at HAX, each operating company managed its own regional CI teams, linked in to various degrees with Resident

Involvement (RI). Across the operating companies interviewees felt that while the boundaries between CI and RI were blurred, these should be kept distinct. With the centralisation of the CI function at HAX, a number of managers and frontline staff vacated their positions. Some staff who wanted to remain in the organisation were offered new positions not within commutable distances, and felt implicitly forced to leave. Others felt that a reduction in responsibility, and strategic authority, from being in charge of budgets to having no control over budgets, meant they were effectively being demoted.

In terms of operational implications, concerns were expressed at OPCO3 about the efficiency drive and reduction of frontline staff who were being spread too thinly across a dispersed stock of estates.

At OPCO2, it was also felt that the financial stability afforded by HAX, meant that this operating company had the capacity to bid for contracts, monitor these contracts and 'front- load projects' i.e. working first and receiving funding on completion of performance targets

At OPCO3, CI was closely linked with Resident Involvement (RI) and delivered by a number of regional teams. Funding was both external and internal, with the former about 3 times the latter. The work was delivered by local teams responding to local needs, which were seen to be popular with local communities. The service was more resident led but according to executives this type of service was limited in terms of achieving economies of scale.

7.2.2. Culture:

The different operating companies had separate visions of what CI meant, although all of them were locally responsive whether in large-scale employment schemes based in big city estates with a large concentration of housing stock, or smaller community projects on dispersed estates in smaller towns. The more commercial strategic priorities and CI ethos of OPCO2 were widely regarded as having been adopted as the template for a HAX wide approach. Consequently staff at that operating company did not experience as great a shift in organisational culture after the rationalisation of the operating companies' respective CI departments. Some staff at OPCO2 did however feel less empowered after the restructure which they felt created a more delineated sense of hierarchy and authority, and an emphasis on group centre control.

A more dramatic shift in culture was experienced at OPCO1 and OPCO3, where staff felt a greater loss of identity and taken-for-granted ways of doing things. The view expressed was that restructure *"was not taking the best out of each organisation"*, and that *"the relationship with HAX did not feel like a partnership"* (C5, Regional CI Manager). Apart from increased sense of hierarchy and feelings of disempowerment, a recurring theme was the lack of debate, information and communication about the future strategic direction of CI at HAX. Frontline staff didn't feel engaged with the decisions made about them. At these companies morale within the regional CI teams seemed low, with anxiety and trepidation expressed about the future direction of CI at HAX.

At OPCO2 CI officers saw it as a social responsibility of the organisation to help communities, and that their role was about 'giving back'.

7.2.3. Institutional Logics:

The shift in dominant logic from community to consumer focus was most keenly observed at OPCO1 and OPCO3. At APCO3 in particular managers felt that the rationale behind CI should be to develop and empower residents and communities. Concern was expressed about delivering services that were not needed by shifting from community-led schemes to funding-led projects. The former type of projects were regarded as qualitative and sustainable, while the latter were viewed as quantitative and driven by numbers. An example was provided of certain employment schemes offering 6 month work placements, which would apparently end up costing tenants more once they came off the social welfare benefits.

There was also some apprehension about the loss of local knowledge through the staff that were leaving HAX. Concern was expressed by regional managers that the new central CI department did not capture enough collective or local experience in all the operating companies, and that *"the new vision of CI does not take into account that every estate is different."* (C5, Regional Manager)

HAX's mission statements and values like 'social business' (HAX, 2008b) were interpreted as *"becoming more business, and less social"* (C6, Regional

Manager) since a commercial motivation appeared to take over as the main change driver in the reorientation of the CI service. OPCO3 interviewees described a shift in rationale from empowering residents and communities, and investing in people to predominantly efficiency and financial drivers, and systems-oriented approaches. The same operating company considered the added value to their service as having local staff, local contractors as part of a sustainable communities approach, and face-to-face contact with tenants. CI programmes focused on communities, hubs and community centres with local impact and regional responsiveness were seen as making their estates more attractive to potential tenants, but this localism logic was being displaced by the new corporate strategic directions and a more consumerist rationale.

7.3. Centralised Community Investment Management

7.3.1. Strategy:

The change in the strategic management of CI at HAX is a key focus area for this study. The limitations of the previously regional CI structure was explained in a CI statement:

“For many years the Group Operating Companies have been successfully engaged in local Community Investment (CI) activities. Activity has been largely neighbourhood based and linked to Resident Involvement and Community Centres. This is somewhat fragmented and

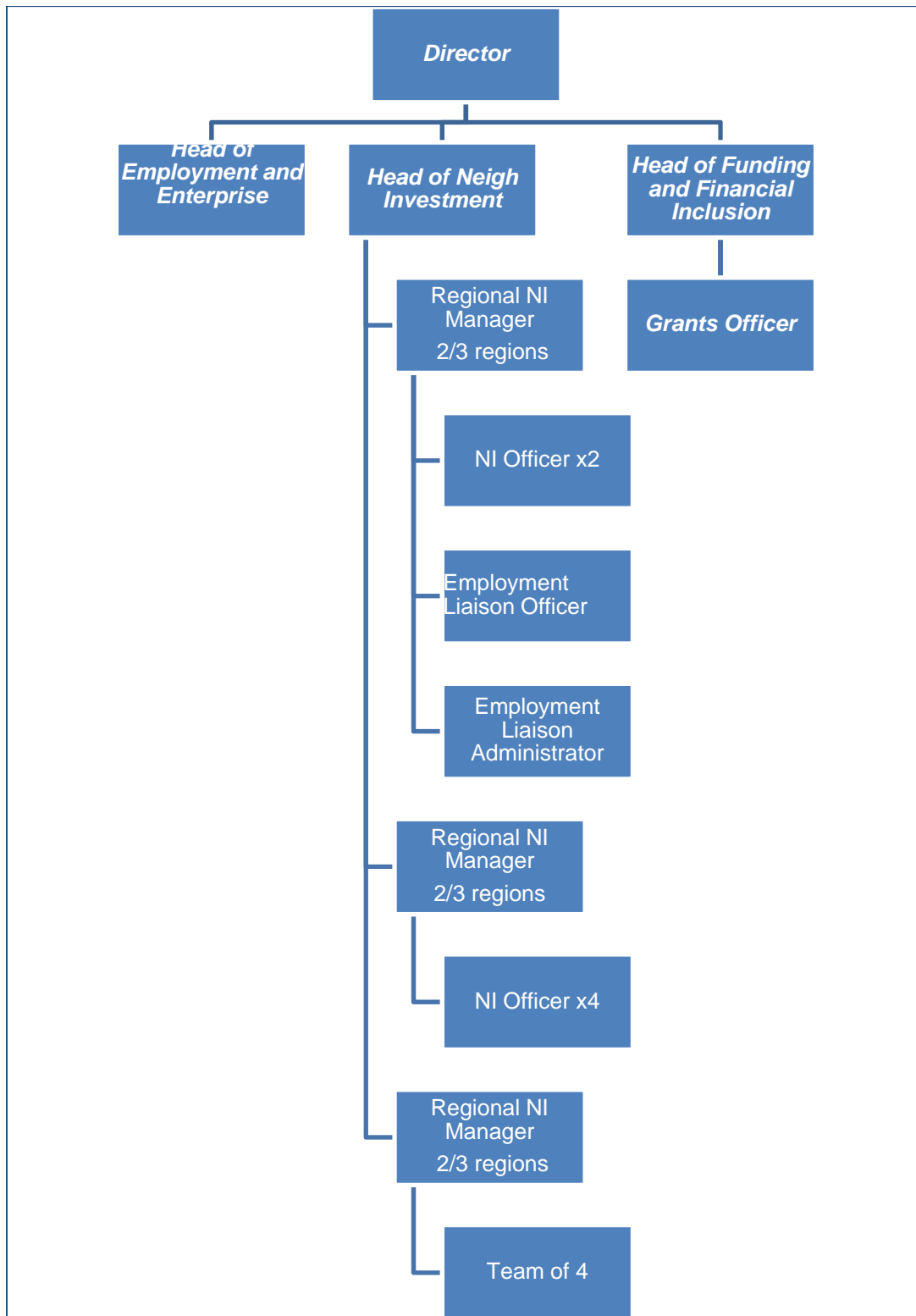
the sum of the parts feels less than the whole. There is also a wide variation in the level of resources available in each Op Co.” (Community Investment Strategy Document -HAX, 2008b, p.1)

As part of the restructure process the regional teams that managed CI became replaced with a centralised team headed by a new Director of CI, who was one of a whole new tier of directors at HAX. Divisional heads of CI from the operating companies were replaced by functional Heads of Employment and Enterprise, Neighbourhood Investment and Financial Inclusion and Fundraising. Figure 7-2. illustrates the new centralised department structure.

Work and Enterprise related to supporting people into work. It was funding led and focused on concentrations of stock. Financial Inclusion was about helping people out of debt, working with credit unions, and providing access to financial services/ products. Neighbourhood Investment (which was less easily defined) was a way of improving residents' perception of their environment and community areas, and linked up with Resident Involvement and Community Development.

Half of the senior central CI team were recruited from OPCO2 and the other half were externally recruited. The structure of the department was a central, functional one with over 30 positions in total. By the end of the data-collecting phase, about a third of positions within the 3 teams were yet to be filled, and the respective Heads of CI services were developing strategic goals and operational plans.

Figure 7-2: Central CI Structure



Source: CISD – HAX (2008)

Emphasising the role of HAs as “*financially sound, long term stakeholders in deprived areas*” and the “*natural partners to local and central government,*” the strategic vision for CI was linked to two policy initiatives: the ‘Place making agenda’ and ‘Worklessness’ (CID- HAX, 2008).

Some early thinking around strategy included:

- 1) Focus on bidding for external funding
- 2) Complying with a group procurement strategy
- 3) Having a core offer around employment and financial inclusion
- 4) Offering a financial health check package- advice and signposting

While the new team were aware that a broad array of CI services were being offered by the operating companies around the country, little ‘hard’ data was available to capture this, and an early strategic aim was to conduct a baseline study across HAX to uncover the level and scope of CI activity. As part of stronger commercial edge fundraising and financial inclusion were put forward as key CI themes for the future. The economic recession at the time was cited as a reason behind prioritising worklessness and training, financial inclusion and mortgage rescue schemes.

After the period of fieldwork for this case study, the new CI staffing structures became finalised and the strategic ‘work-plans’ were detailed and operationalised. Of course for the purpose of this study, the fixed period of the fieldwork is the one that is explored.

7.3.2. Culture:

The perception that the values and culture of OPCO2 were being carried through organisation, and in particular the new CI directorate was not denied by its central team who felt they were going back to the drawing board to some extent but also driving forward with the best practice, objectives and CI vision that had been developed at OPCO2. Senior CI staff felt that the more traditional, paternalistic approach to CI, which was tied in with RI and was mainly concerned with community development, was out of date. A focus on fundraising, employment and training, and offering a consistent CI service to all tenants was seen to be more appropriate and in keeping with the culture and corporate vision of HAX. The CI team were not sure about how relevant localised or niche community projects such as the one provided by SHA (a small housing association subsidiary within the HAX group) were in relation to the broader strategic themes they had developed for moving forward.

7.3.3. Institutional Logics:

The new CI management were actively seeking new approaches and ways of working which would see HAX taking a more centralised, strategic approach while other HAs would be still have a more limited focus on local neighbourhoods. The rationale of a consistent service offer was a recurring theme as was the *“need for CI to be as commercial as possible.”*(C1, Manager, Central Team)

According to the new director of CI, the centralised Group-wide approach would have significant benefits, allowing the department to

1. Lever in more funding to increase the resources flowing to residents
2. 'Leverage' Group-wide procurement practices
3. Reach more residents
4. Develop quality assurance standards across the Group
5. Develop expertise in specialist areas that benefit from a scaled up approach eg. unemployment
6. Better support New Business & Growth with a well regarded CI 'offer
7. Innovate and raise HAX's profile

(CID-HAX, 2008)

The central department were hoping to be flexible, to respond to changing political agenda and funding environments. The vision for CI was "*to put HAX ahead of the pack*" (C4, Manager, Central CI Team), by moving from a more community or resident led culture to an entrepreneurial one, choosing activities that made sense in terms of evidence and opportunities. Despite the increase in CI budget as a result of efficiency savings in the organisational restructure, the C team felt that "*we don't need a massive budget to have a massive impact*" (C1 Manager, Central CI Team).

Although a more commercial logic was being adopted, interestingly the new CI department did not endorse the concept of CSR, deeming it "*a bit pointless and*

irrelevant since we are already a socially responsible organisation' (C3, Manager, Central CI Team).

It was felt that HAX needed to be more confident about its identity as a housing association and not a private company, and be proud of the service it was providing.

Measuring social performance was seen to be a way to give business credibility to CI in the same way as the rest of the housing operations were measured. There seemed to be a tension between CI and the rest of the HAX, and “*a perception that the CI department is full of cuddly people*” (C1, Manager, Central CI Team). The new CI team wanted CI to match or look the same as the rest of the business, so were aiming for a CI balanced scorecard in a HAX style. While it was acknowledged that hard outputs didn't capture the worth of CI in a qualitative way, it was felt that some quantitative measurement was needed to give the CI department some legitimacy sitting along the suite of Key Performance Indicators on the group balanced scorecard. While any bidding or tenders would require scoping work and detailed workplans, it was felt that the scorecard was an established senior management tool at HAX and CI needed to be a part of this.

Interestingly this business logic of quantifying outputs was also linked to resident accountability in a reverse of some of the sentiment expressed at the executive management level:

“Lots of good work is being done but not being captured or demonstrated. It’s about demonstrating the impact of what we do. Essentially we also want to be seen to be accountable..... it’s what residents want.” (C1, Manager, Central CI Team)

The CI team expected some tensions early on as some of the operating companies were *“in mourning for the loss of our culture and value-systems”* (C3, Manager Central CI Team), and also resource tensions between what residents might want and what would be most beneficial for HAX as a whole.

7.4. Conclusion

This chapter has considered the changes in CI at HAX from the important perspective of the CI management, both the regional teams that were being displaced and the new centralised team respectively. A key theme emerging from this chapter was that the centralised CI department was created to provide a strategic focus to an inconsistent, localised service, motivated by the logic that CI should be part of a sound business plan. As could be expected, regional CI managers did not buy into this vision of CI, and expressed concern about a loss of local knowledge and a shift in priorities from communities to customers. A permeating corporate culture was seen as challenging the taken-for-granted way of planning and managing the CI service, while a recurring theme was the perceived lack of communication from the senior executive management to regional teams about the rationale behind, and structure of, the impending

changes. The same core themes that emerged from the findings presented in Layers 1 and 2, were also reiterated in this chapter, that is issues around organisational structure, values and identity, leadership and communication, and more specifically the dominant corporate culture at HAX, and the consumerisation of CI.

This case study has provided the opportunity of conducting fieldwork over an extensive period of time to observe the enactment of competing logics, reflecting the hybrid character of HAX as a large HA and highlighting the tensions within the organisation. This chapter has captured how and why the strategic management of CI changed at HAX, from the perspectives of regional CI teams and the new centralised department. These perspectives highlight the tensions between different 'world views' at HAX of the role of HAs in the wider community. The following chapter explores CI in action, and the frontline impacts, if any, from changes in CI strategy and shifts in organisational culture at HAX.

CHAPTER 8:

CASE STUDY FINDINGS LAYERS 4 AND 5: A SPECIALIST

SUBSIDIARY AND COMMUNITY PROJECT SNAPSHOTS

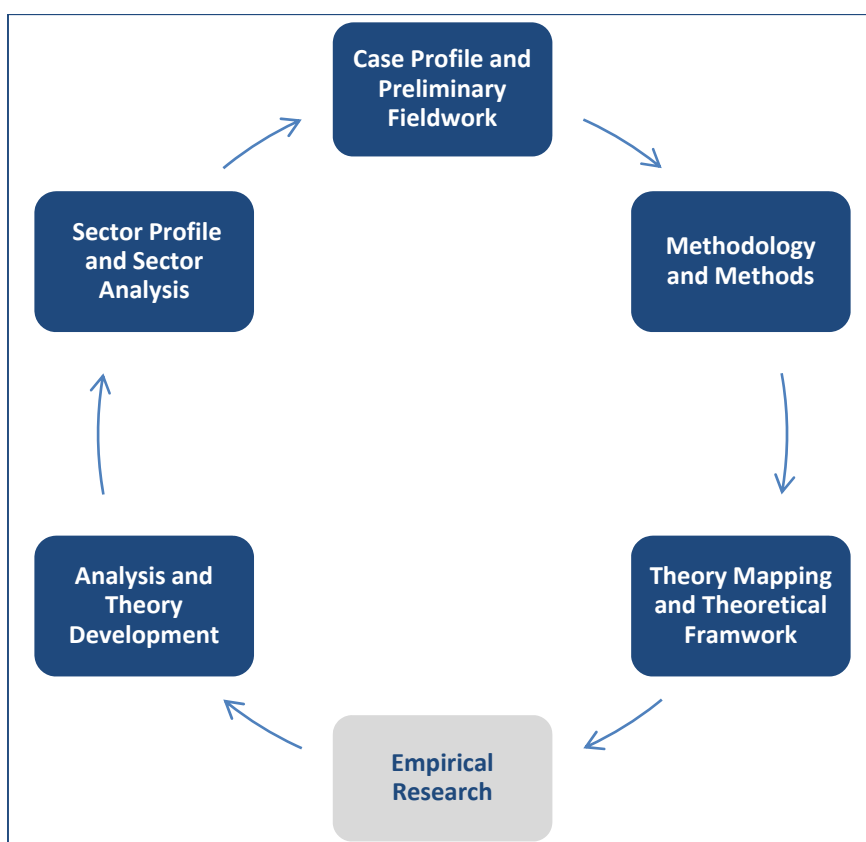
8.1. Introduction

The multi-layered research framework and sampling strategy of this case study have been designed to capture and reflect perspectives from across the organisation from the most strategic positions in the form of the governing Board and senior executive team, to the frontline delivery of CI services, which is the subject matter of this chapter. This chapter deals with the final 2 layers in the empirical section of this thesis as Figure 8-1 denotes. The subject of Layer 4 is the community outreach service at a small, stand-alone BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) subsidiary housing association within the parent organisation HAX. This association, which will be referred to as SHA, while not characteristically reflective of the larger income-generating operating companies in HAX, is nevertheless a pertinent example of the tensions or rival logics manifest in the broader case study. In its changing emergent and realised CI strategies, SHA reflects a shift in organisational culture from a local, regional focus to a more centralised, corporate vision. Table 8 – 1 provides more detail on the research participants at SHA and the research method adopted for fieldwork at this subsidiary.

The fifth and final layer of this study is made up of 4 snapshots of community projects, which include community centres, selected from all 3 main operating

companies, and located in 4 different regions of England. These snapshots give a sense of the type of CI services which were offered by HAX, and the views from housing estate officers and community workers running these services, as well as the service users themselves.

The time spent at these community projects was limited to a day or two, because of the considerations outlined in the methodology Chapter 4, which were to do with getting a sense of the operations of CI and important frontline perspectives, but not to overburden participants or create a false sense of expectation that this study (or indeed the author with her access to HAX's CEO and other senior executives) could in any way influence any of the decisions around the future of these services. Nevertheless, the time spent at these community projects provided an invaluable layer to this study, reflecting many of the core issues around the strategic and cultural tensions within HAX enacted at a local level, as this chapter will uncover. As in the previous chapters, where necessary the job titles of participants are changed to protect their anonymity.

Figure 8-1: Research Cycle: Methodology and Methods

Source: The Author (2010)

Table 8-1: Layers 4 and 5 of the HAX Case Study

	LAYER 4	LAYER 5
Research Subject	A stand-alone <u>BME Subsidiary</u> <u>Community Outreach Project</u> : Strategic and Frontline/ Operational Management	<u>Community Project Snapshots</u> : Single or two visit 'snapshots' of 4 community projects and/or centres located in the North, Midlands and South East, representing the 3 main operating companies.

CASE STUDY FINDINGS LAYERS 4 AND 5:
A SPECIALIST SUBSIDIARY AND COMMUNITY PROJECT SNAPSHOTS

	LAYER 4	LAYER 5
Research Methods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Documentary analysis</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board reports, annual accounts External funding reports Internal strategic reports SHA outreach literature e.g. pamphlets, leaflets, posters <u>Semi-structured Interviews</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outreach manager Outreach case worker Housing officer Board Chairperson Chief Executive <u>Focus group</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outreach service users <u>Participant observation and observation</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community events and workshops Outreach Steering Committee Meetings Organisational behaviour at above events and at regional offices. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Documentary analysis</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reports, leaflets <u>Semi structured Interviews</u> with staff or community members managing each of the community projects/ centres <u>Observation and participant observation</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attending a community fete at one of the projects, observing service users at two of the others.
Frequency	Every 3 – 6 months	1 – 2 visits over the course of the fieldwork.

8.2. SHA – A Specialist Subsidiary

8.2.1. Strategy

As a small subsidiary within HAX, SHA did not have the same financial impact as the larger income-generating operating companies in HAX, but is nonetheless equally if not more, reflective of the changes in the strategic management of CI at HAX, as underpinned by shifts in organisational culture and competing logics.

One of the key strategic changes at HAX was its organisational restructure. Although in terms of staffing and general impacts of the restructure, SHA experienced less collateral damage (being a rather small fish in a large ocean) the changes in its CI programme reflect notably shifts in sub-cultures and dominant institutional logics typified in the organisation (HAX) as a whole, as will be discussed in the following sections.

SHA originated as a small housing association that targeted the housing and social needs of the South Asian community in a mid-sized English city. Particular problems for the community were seen to be overcrowding, poor housing stock in need of major repairs, and barriers of language and culture to accessing mainstream services and advocacy. It was felt that a specific housing-related CI service should be set up to serve that particular community and a bid for external funding was won to develop a long-term (3-6 year) project. In the latter stages of the scheme some internal HAX funding was set aside to top up the external grant.

The purpose of the CI programme was to provide a comprehensive housing advice service to the South Asian community, enabling the most disadvantaged within that ethnic minority group to access information, guidance and support in all matters relating to housing. This included providing advice to this community about the role of HAs, which are not traditionally considered by South Asians in the UK as one of the tenure options available to meet their housing needs. The service was delivered in a number of ways including outreach advice surgeries, home visits, a confidential helpline and case workers attending appointments with clients. Originally planned to be a sign-posting agency, it developed into a much more comprehensive service. At the time of the PhD fieldwork the SHA CI programme was engaged with in-depth casework according to the need of service users who required advocacy, assistance at appointments, filing cases for appeals, transfers, reviews, assisting with homelessness and emergency accommodation. The outreach service did prove to be popular with the South Asian community with over the 6 year duration of the project, which was also awarded a number of external commendations.

The termination of the external funding for SHA's community project coincided with the restructuring programme at HAX, which was based on a rationale of centralizing services to be more efficient and 'fit for purpose.' As the SHA outreach service was coming to a close, service users were asked invited to attend a focus group discussion which was conducted at the housing association's main office. The purpose of this focus group was to obtain service users' views for both the PhD case study as well as for putting together a report

for the association as part of the reciprocal relationship for the time spent there gathering data. Service users' feedback was sought on the value of the CI programme, if, and in what way, they felt it was useful and unique, and which other agencies they would consider accessing after the closure of this particular outreach service provided by SHA. Of the participants at the focus group, only one was a tenant of that association, while the others were members of the same local South Asian community and were in a variety of tenures, including city council housing, other housing association accommodation, private rented or living with extended family. All participants had ongoing housing cases with the SHA community programme, including serious repair issues or relocation applications. The key themes that emerged from the focus group discussion were Language; Cultural Empathy; Personal and Efficient Service, and Lack of Equivalent Alternative Service.

The provision of advice and advocacy in their own language was a strongly cited factor by participants who did not feel fluent or confident in English, and found the task of filling out forms and speaking to the local council or solicitors very daunting. Their experience of mainstream housing services was that: *"They don't speak in our language"* (D7, Service User from Focus Group).

Apart from filling out forms, assistance with writing letters in English was also seen as critically important. Beyond the language barrier, service users felt that the community outreach staff, who had a similar ethnic and cultural background, provided a culturally sensitive and empathetic service, allowing them to develop trust and build a relationship with their case worker. A few commented that the

service had a good insight into which areas their families would feel comfortable and safe to live in. The one-to-one relationship and personal service from the community service manager and case workers were seen as key to the value of the service, particularly on cases that could take a few years to resolve. It was felt that whichever other agency they now approached, they would be 'starting from scratch'. At the outreach service, staff were accessible with mobile phone numbers, making themselves available to make home visits, and attending meetings at banks or local authorities with service users. Furthermore respondents felt that apart from practical support, they were actually listened to and had emotional support too. According to one participant in the group discussions:

"Good about outreach service is able to come down your house and help you sort out your problems with full support." (D7, Service User)

Although many of the cases were complicated and protracted, service users felt they were receiving a faster and more efficient service as opposed to being 'a number in a file' at other local agencies. They described the service as quicker than others and more flexible. All the service users had contacted SHA with housing-specific concerns, and, despite guidance and signposting from the community project staff on which agencies could further assist in their cases, there was a reluctance and unwillingness to consult more mainstream services:

"They won't understand us - we don't want to go anywhere else" (D7, Service User). Others described the closure of the service as 'upsetting' and 'very distressing' (D7, Service User). When asked which agencies they would turn to

after the service closure, local community groups were mentioned who also provided a general service targeted at the same South Asian but not a specialist housing advice service.

Local agencies and community groups with a working relationship with SHA's CI service were also contacted for feedback on their view of the programme. Overall the agencies and groups responded positively to working with SHA's outreach service, which they felt was valuable particularly because as it helped their clients overcome language and cultural barriers relating to accessing housing services. There was a common expression of regret that the service would be coming to an end as it was felt that there was still a need for a housing service targeting that section of the community. In a question relating to how the service could have been improved, some responses were that the community project could have been expanded to allow more people to access it.

In September 2008 a report was put forward to the SHA Board (SHA, 2008) with proposals for the continuation of the outreach service after March 2009, when the external funding would expire. The report was prepared by the acting Chief Executive of SHA at the time, the Community Service Manager, and a community liason officer from HAX. In highlighting the value of the community outreach project, the report made links between the service and the corporate objectives of '*Improving Lives*' and '*Providing Excellent Customer Services*' (HAX, 2008b). Furthermore it was suggested that it was this community outreach programme that made SHA unique and established the link with the South Asian community in that city.

A number of options were considered for the future direction of the community project by trying to obtain funding to continue to run or expand the service through different grant streams or bodies. The Board was recommended that SHA should consider the community project as a core service within the organisation and look to continue to provide housing advice and community development or capacity building. Ultimately these recommendations were not followed through because it was not seen to be feasible within SHA's business plan, not being affordable or sustainable. The 6 year CI project came to a close in June 2009, and a discussion was due to take place in 2010-2011 as to the direction of any future CI programme at SHA, which could be integrated with its mainstream housing service.

8.2.2. Culture:

A year and a half prior to the closure of its community outreach programme, an erosion of links with the South Asian community had already begun with the loss of Asian staff and the association's offices moving from a predominantly Asian/ ethnic minority area to a more 'professional' location in the business area of the city centre. However, because the community programme ran outreach surgeries in venues near the South Asian communities, this was seen to compensate for the relocation. With the nature of the Choice Based Letting system in the UK, only a small percentage of SHA's few hundred properties are actually occupied by ethnic minority tenants, while only a couple of its Board

members are from ethnic minority backgrounds. The link with the South Asian community has been an essential part of the BME status of SHA, and this was maintained through the CI service. With the termination of this service, the question does arise as to what now defines the BME character of SHA, apart from its legal status.

Looking broadly at changes in organisational culture, during the early phases of the fieldwork there was a universal appreciation from SHA's board members, executives, housing managers and outreach staff as to value of the community service as the defining characteristic of the association, and something that added value to HAX by making a unique contribution to a local community. One comment was that SHA was *"a feather in the cap for HAX because of its uniqueness but we don't want to be rolled out as a PR trick"* (D4, SHA Board Member). The key objectives of the community service at HSA included value-laden statements such as:

'To engage more local organisations and agencies in innovative ways in delivering a unique and specialist service.....To ensure equality of access to culturally appropriate information, assistance and guidance in housing matters.....To create a Specialist housing advice point for South Asian communities in need of housing and related matters.' (SHA, 2008)

However the strategic trajectory at HAX with its efficiency-driven restructuring and centralisation programme did not seem to have a cultural fit with the specialist local community service provided by SHA. Once external grant (and

internal support) funding for the programme had expired, no central or head office resources were made available to support the outreach staff in applying for further funding pools. Because of a growing business rationale, SHA was led down a more generic route with a standard housing service offer to tenants or consumers, rather than a provider of specialist outreach service targeting the Asian community.

It was perceived that like other parts of HAX, CI staff with a strong regional or local community ethos seemed to no longer have a cultural fit with the organisation, and their positions within the organisation were no longer tenable. In the case of SHA it was the project staff who most identified with the local community agenda, that were most vociferous in their opinion of the strategic direction of HAX and its changing cultures. A recurring issue was the lack of consultation or communication from the head office of the parent company HAX, particularly over the restructuring period which was fraught with uncertainty for both frontline housing and community project staff alike. Expressions like *'in a limbo'* or *'left in the dark'* (D1 and D2, CI officers) were used to describe the situation. Although the CI programme at SHA was celebrated as something unique within the HAX group, the staff and Board members was not aware of the new centralised CI department at HAX, and community officers at SHA regretted that they had not been contacted by the new CI team to share their experience and knowledge gained over the 6 year duration of the community project.

8.2.3. Institutional Logics:

In the report to the SHA Board referred to above (SHA, 2008), an important factor in considering the viable options for the future of the outreach project was the funding climate at that time. The discussion acknowledged that the funding climate in the UK had changed since SHA initially secured the grant funding, and that in general funders were not offering the large sums required to fund the entire project for a further period. In addition, funders were no longer offering grants for general housing advice services but concentrating on awarding grants for specific funding streams such as worklessness, health and wellbeing or financial inclusion. It was also becoming more challenging to obtain funding for BME specific projects, as funders were looking rather to award grants for neighbourhoods or areas rather than targeting specific minority groups. This shift away from localised community services to specific themes of activities offered to a range of communities was a growing trend reflected in changing political agendas, shifts in the nature of the delivery of CI among large social housing providers, and indeed in the strategic developments at HAX, with its new central CI department.

In the space of few months, therefore, a paradigm shift occurred in the taken for granted assumptions at SHA. Senior executives and SHA Board members who had been supportive of this highly individual community service had reverted to the 'company line' from HAX. A business rationale was emphasised and the service closure described as "*a decision on where best to put limited resources*" (D3, SHA Housing Manager). Rather than locally responding to the needs of a

particular community, any future CI activity at SHA would follow the general themes determined by the centralised CI department at HAX.

There were suggestions from senior staff that the community services offered by SHA were really the responsibility of the local city council. The “*loss of our outreach*” provided some “*breathing space*” (D4, SHA Board Member) to think about the future direction of CI at the association and to concentrate more on Tenant Involvement. Some participants with a personal and cultural link to the association, though rueing the loss of the outreach service, felt the financial stability achieved from being a subsidiary of an efficient and financially driven organisation merited the shift in identity.

Prior to joining the HAX group, SHA was not in a strong financial position, with not the most professional management, and lacking proper policies and procedures. Since coming under the financial wing of HAX, SHA was becoming a more professional, financially secure association with proper health and safety and maintenance policies, and a valuable group central administrative support. However there were also some perceived disadvantages of this relationship with the newly restructured HAX, such as greater delineated hierarchy, and a loss of self-determination and autonomy which left a Board member at SHA “*feeling a bit removed from the decision-making*”, such as SHA losing its own chief executive and having to share a regional manager with other parts of the HAX Group. With the dominance of a business logic there was also some apprehension that “*we are in danger of losing its grass roots touch*” (D2, SHA CI Officer).

SHA was viewed by its parent organisation HAX as moving into a new strategic phase with a focus on growth strategy, partnership working and increasing consumerist approaches.

8.3. Layer 5: Community Investment Project Snapshots

8.3.1. Community centre: OPCO1

a) Strategy:

The estate on which this community centre was located had around 200 properties, with the majority managed by HAX, and had been previously seen as a 'no-go area' with high levels of vandalism and crime. An evaluation was conducted in 2000 and it was felt that a new community house was needed to reduce crime and the fear of crime and to improve the quality of life for the local community. This community centre, owned by HAX, became a key community hub for the local area, changing the character of the neighbourhood.

The manager of the community house was the main link to the local community and a key proponent of the work done there. With an 'open door policy' at the centre, staff worked with local bodies and agencies, building up rapport and trust, signposting and providing advice. The types of activities offered included after school clubs, elders lunch clubs, computer classes, parenting skills and kids events, as well as holding a gardening tool library.

At the time of conducting fieldwork, morale was low at the community centre with high levels of uncertainty regarding job prospects in HAX's new organisational structure. The community house manager had recently been informed he would be made redundant as his position was no longer fundable as a 'mainstream salary'. This manager had been local to the estate for more than 20 years and facilitated the link between the estate and the organisation. He had been in his position for about 6 years, and key proponent of the work done there. This had provoked frustration and annoyance on the part of the community centre's steering committee, which was made up of OPCO1 staff, tenants and local partners. Managers did admit that a lack of a cohesive strategy and the informal arrangements with the local council had not helped matters. It was felt that the manager of the community centre had a very important role being part of the community himself, and his role would now be missing.

b) Culture

Staff felt that the culture of the community centre was one of accessibility, with an open door policy, working with any agency, and building a rapport and trust with communities.

The changing organisational culture at this community centre was described by a manager as "*Corporateness has come in*" (E1-3, CI project manager). Managers regarded themselves as socially driven, but were having to adapt to terms faced like 'market place' and 'customer service.' They appreciated that a

level of professionalism was necessary across HAX but were concerned about how rigid central control was going to be, for example with commissioning contracts. It was felt that *“being a part of a big department can create ‘velvet handcuffs’ by increasing income but reducing flexibility”* (E1-3, CI Project manager). Staff commented on the challenge of *‘toeing the line and spouting company policy’* (E1-2, CI Officer) and the loss of control and responsibility which affected low morale. There was equally concern about the lack of transparency around the restructure programme, and the different power dynamic between HAX as a landlord and its tenants. Overall uncertainty regarding job security and the loss of the community centre’s local manager was considered to be stressful, demoralising and psychologically challenging. It was felt that a real dialogue with HAX was needed.

Looking at the changing culture at HAX, interviewees felt that broadly the organisation was becoming more professional but also more rigid, with a changing power relationship between landlords and tenants. There was some discontent about a perceived lack of transparency about structural changes in the organisation, and a confusion about who was in charge during the restructure. Managers felt also there was a tension between some redundancies for efficiency changes and apparent increases in senior executive salaries, as reported in the press at the time.

In the new organisational structure, staff at this centre also felt a loss of strategic control or decision-making capacity, as their jobs became more operational and less strategic, for example in the case of being informed that

there would no longer be a community officer at the centre after a few months. Communication and consultation between the community centre steering committee and HAX was perceived to be lacking, while staff also expressed a loss of control and flexibility. At the same time a pressure was felt to 'toe the line' and adhere to the new company policy.

c) Institutional Logics:

Staff at the community centre (predominantly from a voluntary third sector background) commented on the visible shift from a more socially motivated community development programme to a more financially driven CI plan.

Despite the apparent wealth associated with the part of the country where this estate was located, staff described hidden communities of deprivation, unemployment and homelessness. In this respect local knowledge was seen to be critical to drill down into these communities, and some concern was expressed about the loss of local knowledge and responsiveness in the new structure of CI at HAX. For this particular community centre, it was felt that the loss of a trusted and accessible on-site manager, who was from the local community, would leave a big gap in the service. The argument was made that while *"everyone does agency, no-one brings it together in a wrap-around service with individual case work"* (E1-3, CI Project Manager). At the same time, staff did appreciate the need for an increasing professionalization of the service, and that perhaps a reliance on community centre officer was not healthy.

However with the imminent departure of the community officer, staff at this operating company were worried about the future service lacking local knowledge and responsiveness. For them the service was about local contact and skills rather than financially-driven schemes. This shift from a more local community, social focus to a greater commercial rationale was identified.

When questioned about the purpose behind community projects such as this centre, managers felt that HAs were in a good position to work with communities therefore appropriately tasked to do so. In the case of this community centre, of the over 15 housing providers active in the area HAX was the largest and most influential and well placed to provide this community service.

8.3.2. Community Health and Fitness Facility: OPCO2

a) Strategy:

In the case of OPCO2, large concentrations of housing stock presented a range of social problems in one town area. The community facility that was identified here was regarded by both the community and HAX as success story. It came into operation a few years previously with the conversion of an old dilapidated laundry room into a small fitness centre on a housing estate. The fitness centre included a exercise machines, weights equipment and a range of boxing equipment With over 100 members registered at the time of the fieldwork, it

could fit up to about 25 people at a time, and was used by both residents and the general community on estate, with a range of members from older people, young boxers, and even an African Muslim women's group. Specific times were allocated to different groups at the estate, for example the women's group trained on a few mornings while young boxers came in on some evenings. The project was a partnership scheme with a local authority health project paying the manager's salary and HAX providing the facility and capital investment.

CI officers at the OPCO2 felt that the new strategic aims outlined by the new central CI team strengthened the existing vision of CI expressed as certain core themes. This health centre tied in with one of these core themes of promoting healthy living on OPCO2 estates.

b) Culture:

The manger was the main service provider and only he decided who could register as a member of the gym. He didn't believe in using forms but rather his own *'litmus test for troublemakers'*, claiming that *'the ones who come back in a week are genuinely interested'* (E2-2, Service Manager). As someone local to the community, the manager at the facility was also the fitness trainer, taking pride in the community project which was occupying young people who could otherwise be involved in drugs or crime, as well as helping community elders keep fit. There was a sense of community ownership of the facility, which was highly valued by the residents on that estate. The manager felt that the facility

was culturally sensitive to different groups of users. Despite the centre being located in 'a dodgy area', the office could be left open but nothing was ever taken, and, unlike surrounding properties, the premises had not been vandalised in any way. The manager felt a strong sense of pride and ownership of the facility and this reflected on the level of trust the community had in him.

While front-line staff displayed a sense of ownership in the community facility, local CI staff also felt that the positive culture and atmosphere there reflected the way OPCO2 was managing CI, and were identified with both the vision of the operating company and also its parent body HAX.

c) Institutional Logics:

While this project combined a strategic outlook with OPCO2 responding to funding opportunities and a health and sports priority in the run up to Olympics, it was also very much a locally responsive, community focused facility, with a strong emphasis on locally rooted management. The fitness centre was managed by a key local individual with a strong sense of civic duty, and also someone with a fitness background who was well qualified to actually train and coach members of the community utilising the centre.

Overall, CI officers saw it as a social responsibility of the organisation to help communities, and that "our role is about giving back to the community" (E2-1, Regional CI Project Manager). It was also felt that the financial stability afforded

by HAX, meant that this operating company had the capacity to bid for contracts, monitor these contracts and 'front-load projects' i.e. working first and receiving funding on completion of performance targets. The way in which this project was jointly funded through HAX and a local government health scheme was identified as a positive and productive way of running a successful CI project.

8.3.3. Local Estate and Community Centre: OPCO3

a) Strategy:

One of the many community centres run by OPCO 3, this particular facility was located in a previously industrial city, but which now had pockets of deprivation. On this particular estate unemployment was at about 90%, and many of the community centre's activities were focused on social inclusion such as youth clubs and training courses. The building was also used for police surgeries, community meetings and a luncheon club while annual events included summer fairs and a Christmas Bazaar. Described as a 'hub for resident care' for the estate's approximately 7000 tenants, this community centre also had conference facilities which were open to the community for hire at a subsidised rate. While the centre was largely self-funded through grants as opposed to being funded in-house by OPCO3, there was still some concern about the centralisation of CI budgets and HAX, and what the implications would be for this community project over the following financial year. There was some

uncertainty about what the new central CI strategy was about, what funding was allocated to which activities and what would be the criteria for accessing that funding.

As was in the case at other operating companies, there was a strong perception that regional CI staff from OPCO3 were being let go, while staff at OPCO's 1 and 2 remained in position, or found new positions within the amalgamated structure. On the broader impact of the staff restructure and consolidation of operating companies, the manager of this centre felt that the reduced number of local estate staff was already having a detrimental effect on the estate. Examples were given of local contractors being replaced by a centrally-run in-house maintenance operation which had apparently lead to emergency repairs on the estate being delayed, and tenants waiting for up to a year for double glazing, or their central heating to get fixed. Tenants were no longer able to pay rent and report repairs at the estate office.

There was some concern about the loss of two tiers of management between HAX and this estate, and a suggestion that some of the strategic changes at HAX were timed to take best advantage of a gap between the demise of the previous regulatory body, the Housing Corporation, and the establishment of the new one, the TSA (Tenant Services Authority). In terms of HAX's accountability to tenant panels, it was felt that while regional panels met regularly, the joint meeting of all regional panels at OPCO3 was no longer possible because the resulting lobby would be too strong.

b) Culture:

One of the main themes that emerged on the changing culture at this community centre was the perceived lack of communication between HAX, OPCO 3 and the local front-line staff. Since the centralisation of the regional CI teams had taken place, the manager at this community centre had not liaised with anyone from the new CI department. Indeed the lack of consultation between HAX and local staff on changes at the estate was a recurring issue. While it was felt that the relationship with HAX ought to be a partnership, because of the lack of consultation on regional or local priorities, it felt instead like a *“top down, central command and control arrangement”* (E3-3, Frontline Service Manager). The balance of power was seen to be heavily weighted in the favour of the senior management at HAX. The lack of communication and information meant that it was up to individuals at the community centre to make their own effort to find out what was happening, either with repeated requests for information from HAX or through the media and industry publications such as Inside Housing. As in other parts of the organisation, staff here had read about apparent executive pay rises at HAX in the press, and this had led to feelings of resentment as some local staff had to leave while others were facing pay freezes.

The apparent shift in power dynamics, the loss of local staff, and the centralisation of a number of services left frontline workers at this community centre feeling a loss of authority. The new structure also distanced the Board from the residents which felt it was *‘like brick walls being put up’* (E3-1,

Resident/Frontline Service Manager). The OPCO3 Board used to visit the estate three times a year but these visits had now stopped. The staff at the community centre felt detached from OPCO3, and described their morale as low.

The loss of local knowledge due to fewer local staff was seen to compromise a former strength at OPCO3 which was about local services and facilities, and which had attracted people to live on OPCO 3 estates. This was felt to have had a measurable impact on reduced demand for properties, increasing the number of voids on the estate from under 5 to around 30 properties. Some of these vacancies carried over for a number of months before being filled compared to a year previously when there used to be a waiting list of people trying to secure accommodation on the estate.

Some sentiment was expressed about OPCO3's culture being destroyed and its legacy lost while the new vision of social housing being put forward by HAX was quite a different one. The new culture emerging at HAX was described as being about banking and finances, and one that was "*ruthlessly driven*" (E3-2, Frontline service staff member). Their relationship with HAX was described as "*never-ending battle*" (E3-1, Resident/ Service Manager). Returning again to the loss of local service, it was felt that "*senior management in their ivory tower lack local understanding and awareness of local issues*" (E3-1, Resident/ Service Manager).

c) Institutional Logics:

The rationale behind providing CI services at OPCO3 such as the ones delivered by this community centre was said to be about building sustainable communities. CI was regarded as part of the core service offer, and a part of the organisation that should be resident driven. Since “community investment is about the people who live here” (E-2, Frontline Service Staff Member) emphasis should be placed on local strategies. This centre and estate office had 7 core staff but also 30 volunteers, which staff felt reflected its value to the community. A community centre was seen to be successful if the manager was available round the clock, and didn’t turn anyone away. Local estate management meant having a pulse on local issues as opposed to a call centre which was detached from what was happening on the ground.

While staff at this community centre understood that centralisation was about efficiencies there was also a perception that the new central management was moving too quickly, and that some of the changes were challenging for residents to deal with for example older residents using the central call centre to report repairs. The loss of local contractors was viewed as having a big local impact, with residents feeling like promises not being met by the new contractors. In addition to this it seemed like regional CI staff at OPCO3 who had great local knowledge were no longer needed at HAX.

Apart from some of the changes affecting staff and resident confidence another concern was the lack of accountability and scrutiny in the new centralised

structure. The community centre had a responsibility to protect the rights of the residents on this estate, which staff felt they could do without patronising residents. On the corporate vision at HAX to be a 'business for social purpose', the sentiment was expressed that while anyone could write a mission statement the evidence needed to be seen in practice.

8.3.4. Community House and Cafe: OPCO3

a) Strategy:

This community facility was located on a small village estate with around 300 properties which was broadly regarded as a successful estate. The community centre was run as a charity by a Residents' Association. Originally a warden's house, the property had been used as a community house for over 10 years. Certain active members of the Residents' Association and Estate Management Committees were also active on OPCO3's Regional Tenant Panels.

At the Community House, facilities included an estate office, a community cafe and an IT suite with internet access and offering IT courses for residents. Apart from holding community services such as police surgeries, the estate office constituted a 'One-stop shop' for residents where they could make rent payments and report repairs. Local estate officers had direct contact with residents.

Following the restructure programme at HAX, changes at the estate included some staff redundancies, staff having to reapply for existing jobs (as was the case across many departments at HAX) and reduced estate office opening hours.

b) Culture:

Staff redundancies on the estate had created unsettled feelings and apprehension. The challenging uncertainty on the future of OPCO3 seemed to be exacerbated by a lack of information about the changes at HAX, which came *‘too little and too late.’* (E4-2, Resident Association member)

There were strong fears expressed that the “organisational culture, ethos and roots” of OPCO3 were being “*wiped out*” (E4-1, Resident Manager). The staff here was proud of the heritage of OPCO3, and all the awards and accolades it had received over time. There was a limited appreciation of the new vision and identity at HAX, but rather a greater lack of understanding about the aims behind the earlier merger between HAX and OPCO3 and, more recently, the organisational restructure at HAX with the amalgamation of its operating companies. In both instances the changes at OPCO3 meant the loss of staff and a feeling of “being left high and dry” (E4-3, Resident Association member)

The organisational culture here was about having a sense of pride and ownership of the community house and the estate, with a close community feel. With some of the changes that had taken place, staff and residents were now unsure who to deal with at HAX, and felt like they were losing contact with HAX.

One member of the Residents' Association felt that "*It would be a shame to lose everything OPCO3 stood for*" (E4-1, Resident Manager). The opportunity to share feelings and compare notes at an annual OPCO3 conference of resident panels from across the organisation, was now no longer available, leading again to feelings of being divided rather than unified. For residents who had always received a very high standard of service, there was some fear of standards slipping, although there was no evidence at that stage that they would.

c) Institutional Logics:

The rationale behind CI was strongly tied into an OPCO3 ethos of putting residents at the heart of the organisation. This was why CI activities such as training and development programmes for residents was a key focus at OPCO3. At the heart of the service offer was a focus on local issues, with the centre priding itself on its commitment to residents of the estate.

The estate manager's role fitted in with this offer, with the 'one-stop shop' estate office fulfilling a comprehensive range of functions such as home visits, lettings, maintenance and void turnarounds. With the changing strategic direction at HAX though, most of these functions were being centralised thereby slowly rendering the estate manager's role redundant.

Strong local vision and services generated the close community feel at the estate. It was thought to be a 'credit to the estate' that in a number of families, the next generation in families were returning to the same estate.

8.4. Conclusion

This chapter and the preceding chapters 6 and 7 have explored the multi-layered views captured over 14 months of empirical research across the management tiers of the parent and operating entities at HAX. The narrative of each of these layers or mini-cases has been laid out across the broad themes of emergent strategy, organisational culture and institutional logics. The author's intention has been to describe the changes in the management of CI at HAX as viewed by a multiplicity of actors within the organisation and reflect the range of co-existent visions of the same organisation. In each of the layers the sub-culture was described reflecting the organisation's changing identity, values, local or central bias, and power dynamics. While uncovering the institutional logics dominating the organisation, participants' views and perceptions were explored, and specifically their opinions on the core purpose and identity of the organisation, new strategic directions, and the rationale behind why and how CI is done and whether community logics or consumerist models are dominant in the strategic direction of CI at HAX. The next chapter will continue with a critical analysis of the key themes that have emerged across these multiple layers comparatively, and then assess which were the key strategic imperatives, the

dominant organisational sub-cultures and driving institutional logics at HAX over this period, before framing them in a theoretical context.

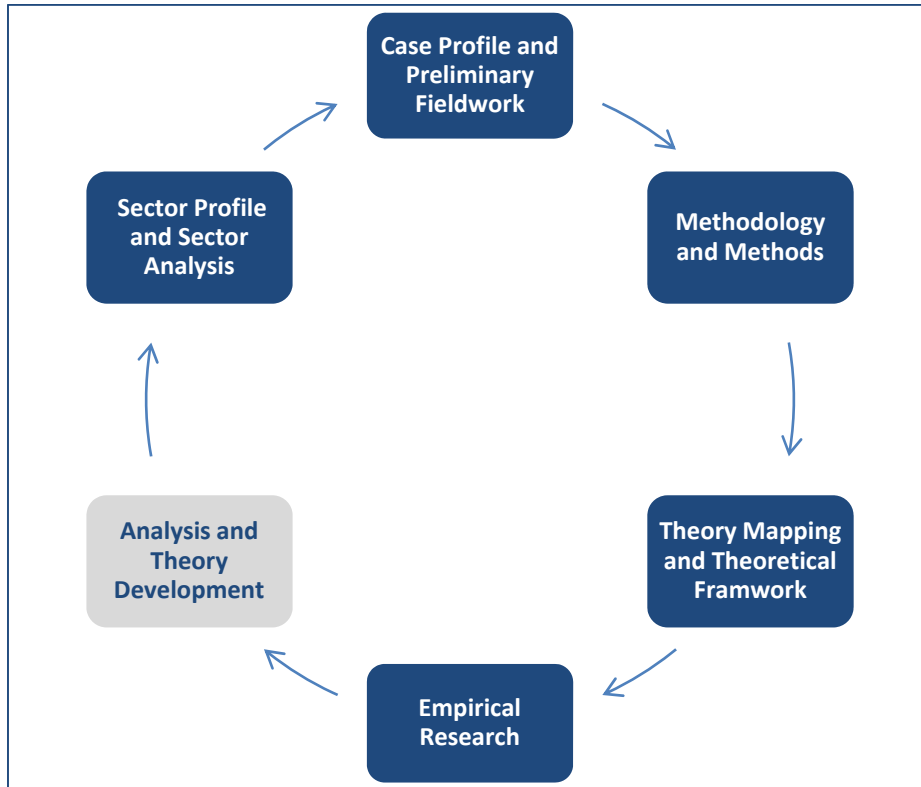
CHAPTER 9:

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

9.1. Introduction

In the previous chapters the multiple layers within HAX were explored and the empirical evidence presented in terms of emergent strategies, organisational sub-cultures and changing institutional logics. The strategic vision and dominant sub-culture within each layer was broadly described through the organisation's changing identity, organisational structure, values and power dynamics. While uncovering the prevailing institutional logics at the organisation, participants' views and perceptions were explored, and specifically their opinions on the core purpose and identity of the organisation, new strategic directions, and the rationale behind CI services. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the key themes that emerged across these layers comparatively, and then locate them within a theoretical framework linking organisational culture with institutional logics to locate the strategic outlook of CI at HAX. This chapter is therefore about critical analysis of the empirical evidence presented in Chapters 5 to 8, and constructing a theoretical outcome based on these research findings. In the research cycle of this project it constitutes the 'Analysis and Theory Development' stage, as illustrated in Figure 9-1.

Figure 9-1: Research Cycle: Methodology and Methods



Source: The Author (2010)

9.2. Key Themes across Organisational Layers

9.2.1. Strategic focus

In Chapter 3 of this thesis ‘strategy’ was described as being broadly concerned with the issues, decisions and actions affecting a firm or organisation, related to both the direction the organisation wishes to take and the scope of activity to enable it do so (Johnson and Scholes, 2002). Following the processual theoretical school of strategic management (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985;

Mintzberg and Lampeel, 1999), key strategic developments were explored at HAX through the multi-faceted prism of participants' views across the organisation. The detail of these developments and views were reflected in the previous three chapters. In this section it is interesting to consider what were the core strategic foci or rationale driving strategic decision-making comparatively across the 5 layers of this study.

As would be expected, the scope for strategic planning and delivery at each level of the organisation differed along a spectrum of hierarchy from corporate strategic responsibility to the management and delivery of frontline CI projects. At Board Level (Layer 1), the strategic focus of participants was the financial accountability of HAX, its annual financial performance, its commercial viability and meeting regulatory demands. Part of the Boards' concern with governance was about resident involvement and the accountability of HAX to its tenants, through a tenant committee structure. While the restructuring of the regional CI departments at HAX into a centralised entity was decided at Executive level, the proposal to the Board for a simplified organisation was packaged with an offer for using efficiency savings to increase HAX's spending on CI activity.

At Executive level (Layer 2), in addition to the commercial strategic focus a drive towards efficiency was a permeating theme of strategic decision-making. For the organisation as whole, the Executive role was to set a corporate agenda through goals and visions, and to respond to external drivers while seeking to strengthen the financial viability and competitive standing of HAX in the social housing sector and external market. A new consolidated CI department was

about refining the business and providing a consistent service. Rather than as a peripheral ‘feel-good’ activity CI would be managed strategically according to centrally-driven themes. These centrally driven themes constitute the main difference between parts ‘A’ and ‘B’ of Layer 3 i.e. the former regional and later centralised CI management teams. The strategic focus of CI in Layer 3A differed within each operating company as was reflected in the previous chapters. Activities tended to be more locally driven and ad hoc, with varying degrees of strategic planning. At OPCO 2, while CI was more strategic and driven by larger scale projects tied in with large urban boroughs, these activities did still appear to respond to the particular needs and opportunities within large housing estates. At OPCOs 1 and 3, activities were more sporadic, with the agenda often resident-driven and facilitated through a large number of estate based community centres and initiatives. With the consolidation of regional CI teams into a new centralised CI department, there was, as would be expected, a much clearer vision and coherent strategic plan that was outlined based around the key themes of Employment and Enterprise, Neighbourhood Investment and Financial Inclusion and Fundraising. These themes and the subsequent workplans and operational strategies were also driven by an efficiency agenda, providing a consistency of service and leveraging economies of scale and influence.

At the specialist subsidiary that was the subject of Layer 4, the interesting developments relating to the strategic outlook of CI was a shift from a dedicated community outreach project that tied in with the identity of the housing association as a BME organisation to the closure of that service and the

implications of a more generic community service offer in the future. Layer 5, which constituted a number of snapshots of individual community projects, was more involved with the frontline delivery of these services and hence the operational aspect of these activities dominated the strategic focus. Accordingly changes in HAX overall that impacted on these services were those relating to restructuring, so the departure of staff, and new line managers for the teams managing these activities. Looking ahead in some cases a degree of autonomy regarding the scope of these activities was lost and budgetary control was felt to be reduced, and the strategic focus was shifted even further to emphasise the operations or delivery of these services.

Table 9-1: Strategic Focus within Each of the Layers of the Organisation

Layer 1- Board	Layer 2- Executives	Layer 3 A CI Management (Regional)	Layer 3B CI Management (Centralised)	Layer 4 – Specialist subsidiary	Layer 5 – Community Projects
Financial and Resident Involvement (Governance)	Efficiency Financial viability 'The Business case' Consistent service offer	Local themes around community development Some strategic focus	Holistic vision Cohesive, efficient national strategy, consistent 'product' offers	From specialised community service to generic housing service	Delivery of community service/ initiative

Source: The Author (2010)

9.2.2. Organisational Structure

The restructuring programme at HAX was a dramatic task undertaken by the organisation over the fieldwork period and understandably a dominant theme emerging from the empirical analysis of fieldwork evidence. The new CI department was one of the first centrally run departments established, as the regional operating companies at HAX were centralised into a single operating body with key group centre functions. The organisational structure of HAX was critical in understanding not only the strategic changes in the organisation but also as a crucial element of its changing cultural web (Johnson, 1992).

While HAX remained a group of legally disparate operating companies, functionally its key departments across these companies were merged to create a new single organisational structure. While at Board level both a Group and individual company Boards had already existed, and the Senior Executive team remained largely unchanged, the main changes were felt at the middle tier of management where for the first time, group-wide functional and central teams replaced regional and divisional ones. The new CI management team (Layer 3) was a prime example of this. The restructuring had a lesser impact on the specialist subsidiaries (such as Layer 4), but frontline services such as community projects were now located under and accountable to new central management. Table 9-2 summarises organisational structure across the multiple layers of HAX.

Table 9-2: Organisational Structure

Layer 1- Board	Layer 2- Executives	Layer 3 A CI Management (Regional)	Layer 3B CI Management (Centralised)	Layer 4 – Specialist subsidiary	Layer 5 – Community Projects
Central and Regional/ Divisional	Central/ Functional	Regional/ Divisional	Central and Functional (some proposed regional)	Regional	Regional (with central control)

Source: The Author (2010)

9.2.3. Leadership and Power Structures

Although the theme of leadership would seem to be most associated with the Board and Executive management levels of the organisation, its impact permeates through HAX and was a strong recurrent theme that emerged across the layers of this case study. Indeed a driving force behind the strategic vision of the organisation was its strong executive leadership, with an assertive approach to corporate planning motivated to a large extent by financial performance, efficiency, growth and influence. Within the senior leadership, a common understanding and vision for the future was well articulated. Like organisational structures, power structures are also part of the cultural web of

an organisation (Johnson, 2002). At HAX the shifts in authority from a regional to group central structure was an obvious change in power dynamics at the organisation. With governance as constant source of tension over the duration of the project, the balance of power between central and regional Boards and the Senior Executive was an issue that emerged from Layer 1 of the study. Not least of these was the role and value of independent Board members and the role of regional Boards of the operating companies at HAX that had been operationally but not legally amalgamated. While these tensions was not fully explored in Chapter 6 due to sensitive data and also not being relevant to the changes in CI at HAX, they are nevertheless indicative of the changing power structure of the organisation. Within Layer 2, power and authority were about strong executive leadership with clear vision, corporate goals and the structure to fulfil and implement these in an efficient way. In a sense the leadership and power structure of the new CI management team (Layer 3 B) were a product of this executive vision, where strong leaders were identified to take forward the agenda of a consistent and cohesive organisation-wide CI strategy.

In Layers 3A, 4 and 5 (the former regional CI teams, the specialist subsidiary and community projects) strong perceptions prevailed about the centralised structure with a 'command and control centre' of highly powerful executives. Within these layers of the organisation a recurrent issue was the loss of local autonomy and strategic control at a regional or estate level. Concern was repeatedly expressed about the lack of transparency and communication from senior management as to the future of various CI departments and projects, and regional staff felt that it took a concerted effort on their own part to glean

any information about some of the imminent strategic and staffing changes. Across the organisational layers participants commented on a more delineated hierarchical management structure.

9.2.4. Organisational Identity

Having already been through a series of mergers prior to the start of this study, the organisational identity of HAX was already evolving. Senior management at HAX were aware of these changes and were making an effort to manage the cultural tensions between these formerly different HAs within HAX. The empirical findings revealed two strong aspects of organisational identity as recurrent themes. The first was the identity and heritage of the individual operating companies respectively, and the second was the corporate identity of HAX as a single organisation, both internally to its hundreds of staff and externally to the sector and market.

With the amalgamation of the operating companies, the loss of individual company identities and heritage was felt by the Board members of the operating companies as well as with the regional CI teams and frontline staff (Layers 1, 3A and 5), particularly at OPCO3 which was felt to have a strong heritage and legacy which was tied in with the way community services were delivered. At SHA (Layer 4) the organisational identity had historically been intrinsically linked to its roots in an ethnic minority community, and continued in the form of a specialist outreach community service targeting that particular community. As

that service drew to an end, and the links at SHA with HAX became more direct, a change in its organisational identity also became evident.

At the executive level (Layer 2) losing the individual identities of the operating companies was a positive step towards creating a unified organisation with a clearer single brand identity. Internal communication within HAX and marketing were about reinforcing this brand, creating this sense of one organisation and describing what HAX was all about. Rather than simply a PR exercise, executives felt strongly that they were unpicking what it meant to be a 'business for social purpose' and translating this into a meaningful identity. Externally contracted employee surveys that were conducted at the organisation were used to understand some of the differences in the organisational identity of its operating companies, with a view to manage cultural change and try to create a unified more homogenous identity.

At the same time in other, more sceptical, parts of the organisation there was also some debate as to whether the unified identity HAX was striving for was about a common culture or a willingness to 'spout the company line.'

The adoption of CSR as a model for framing 'non-core' housing services such as CI, was also indicative of the commercial and corporate outlook dominating the Executive layer of the study, to the extent that HAX became a member of a well recognised and established CSR trade body along with other high profile large private companies. Again, the notion of CSR was regarded with a great deal of scepticism in other parts of the organisation, as completely incongruous with the identity of social housing landlords.

Within Layer 4, there was some deep-felt concern at the loss of local roots and identity. At the same time though some participants with a personal and cultural link to the association SHA felt the financial stability achieved from being a subsidiary of an efficient and financially driven organisation merited the shift in identity away from ethnic community focus to homogenous housing service.

Table 9-3: Organisational Identity

Layer 1- Board	Layer 2- Executives	Layer 3 A CI Management (Regional)	Layer 3B CI Management (Centralised)	Layer 4 – Specialist subsidiary	Layer 5 – Community Projects
Legacy and corporate vision	Corporate vision Promoting single organisation identity (80/20 rule)	Legacy and heritage Regional operating company identities	Single organisation, legitimate core function	Community rooted to professional housing service	Local community based and linked to operating company identity

Source: The Author (2010)

9.2.5. Accountability and relationship with tenants

The relationship between HAX as a social landlord and its tenants was a fascinating theme that emerged from the empirical research, reflecting a divergent range of views across the layers of the organisation. The notion of accountability to tenants linked in with governance issues and the changing power dynamics at HAX, as described above, as well the with the debate on the purpose of CI and the remit of social housing organisations to provide community services (Cave, 2008; NHF, 2008)

In layer 1, there was both sympathy for tenant representation on governing Boards, and some opinion that it was inappropriate, although in the latter case it was more of a traditional paternalistic view that was expressed rather than a consumerist one. At the executive level, however a consumerist perspective dominated with tenants viewed as customers, and accountability in the form of good customer service as opposed to matters relating to governance and management. This consumerist perspective was to a large extent adopted by the centralised CI management team. In the former regional CI teams, as well as in the community project example a more traditional view of tenants prevailed where tenants were viewed as key stakeholders, with a sense of ownership (misplaced according to the senior Executive team) of their estates, and a role to play in governance as well as setting the agenda for CI activities that would respond to local community needs.

9.2.6. CI - Rationale and Delivery

While some of the themes discussed in this section were derived from a synthesis and then systematic reduction of qualitative data in an overview of the fieldwork period, the views described here were directly elicited from participants through topic guides that included questions on the rationale behind CI at HAX, the scope of the service and how it was being delivered. The range of views on the purpose and justification for CI were remarkable. At the Board level, CI was seen as a positive contribution to society that a large social housing landlord such as HAX could make. While opinions ranged on what aspects of CI should be incorporated as part of a core service, the areas that were emphasised were dealing with anti-social behaviour to make estates safe for communities and training and employment opportunities for tenants. The convincing case for organisational restructuring made by the Senior Executive to the Group Board included a sizable increase in funding for a new CI department based on the efficiency savings that would be made by amalgamating the key functions of the operating companies, which highlighted the value placed by the Board on community services for its tenants.

For the senior executive, a key theme driving strategic developments, particularly around the restructuring programme was the quest for a consistent service offer for tenants or customers. There was also a growing acknowledgement of the imbalance between a dominant financial and efficiency agenda, and shortcomings in providing the 'softer stuff' such as CI. The centralised CI directorate was created to provide a strategic focus and

consistency to previously localised, ad hoc services, based on the rationale that CI should be done in a business-like way, making communities more attractive as a part of a sound business plan. The new CI vision was about flexibility and being able to respond to changing political agenda and funding environments. HAX would take a more centralised, strategic approach which would have a greater impact than ad hoc projects tied up with local neighbourhoods.

Interestingly, CI was seen as a key component of a broader CSR strategy at HAX, a strategic view of social responsibility firmly rooted in the private sector. This reinforces the business rationale behind changes in the structure and scope of CI delivery at HAX. In the new CI department, however, managers were less convinced about the relevance of CSR in relation to the service they were managing. At the same time this team was clear about wanting a centralised strategic plan for CI with core universal themes, a greater commercial edge, and a legitimacy within the organisation through the same performance measurement tools that were adopted for core housing services such as a Balanced Scorecard and Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOES).

What this 'hard-edged' commercial approach was replacing was a 'softer' or 'more woolly' rationale put forward by the former CI management teams and frontline staff which was about CI being part of a core housing service offer based on the premise that 'it was the right thing to do' and a responsibility for HAX to give back to the wider community.

A shift in rationale emerged in layer 4, the specialist niche community service provided by a small subsidiary housing association, which because of a growing

business rationale, was led down a more generic route with a standard housing service offer to tenants or consumers, rather than remaining a provider of a specialist outreach service targeting an ethnic minority community.

Table 9-4: Rationale and Delivery

Layer 1- Board	Layer 2- Executives	Layer 3 A CI Management (Regional)	Layer 3B CI Management (Centralised)	Layer 4 – Specialist subsidiary	Layer 5 – Community Projects
Some core themes expected	Discretionary, part of a business plan Adding value in the external environment	Core services-Community driven Often linked to resident involvement	Core strategic themes Funding driven	Core community Identity	Locally responsive Responding to tenant and community needs Empowering and based on community development Diversified according Integral to estates or communities
Funding approval	Central strategies, consistent services	Variation in local regional services, frontline delivery, face-to-face	Consistent offer with some regional variation	Frontline delivery/ local knowledge	Needs led funding bids (such as layer 4 to Big Lottery)

9.3. Key Empirical Themes: Summary

The research findings for this case study reveal the underlying tensions in strategic decision-making between a management drive for an efficient rationalisation of the operating companies and an attachment to a more traditional locally-responsive way of delivering services such as CI. This tension was reflected in the changing identity of HAX where the executive management employed internal and external marketing tools to create a single branded identity and define a new amalgamated association, at the same time as a loss of local identity was highlighted as a source of concern at the frontline of CI delivery.

Some staff, particularly within the former regional and divisional CI teams, felt a loss of the taken-for-granted ways of doing things. They argued that the restructure was not taking the best out of each operating company, and that their relationship with HAX did not feel like a partnership and that changes at HAX were not being fully communicated with them. Concern was expressed about a loss of local knowledge and a shift in rationale from empowering residents and communities, and investing in people to predominantly efficiency and financial drivers, and systems-oriented approaches. Managers regarding themselves as socially driven, were having to adapt to a new 'Corporateness' and adopt terms like 'market place' and 'customer service.'...

Table 9-5 below summarises the key recurrent themes emerging from the empirical analysis of the multiple layers as described above. Although all 5 layers have been discussed in the chapter thus far, for the sake of brevity in this

table layer 5 i.e. the community project snapshots have been not included on this table. Additionally since each one has been constructed as a separate example of CI in action through interaction with a number of different participants including staff, tenants or service users, they each tell a different 'story' although common threads were referred to in the discussion above.

Table 9-5: A synthesis of themes across the layers of HAX

Key themes	Multiple Layers:				
	Layer 1 – Board	Layer 2- Executive	Layer 3 (a) CI (regional/ divisional)	Layer 3 (b) CI (central)	Layer 4- Specialist Subsidiary
Strategic focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial and Resident Involvement (Governance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiency Financial viability 'The Business case' Consist service offer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local themes around community development Some strategic focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holistic vision Cohesive, efficient national strategy, consistent 'product' offers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From specialised community service to generic housing service
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central and Regional/ Divisional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central/ Functional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional/ Divisional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central and Functional (some proposed regional) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legacy and corporate vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate vision, single organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legacy and heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single organisation, legitimate core function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community rooted to professional housing service
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenants on Boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer service KPIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenants and Community Links 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Service Standards KPIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community roots → customer services

Key themes	Multiple Layers:				
	Layer 1 – Board	Layer 2- Executive	Layer 3 (a) CI (regional/ divisional)	Layer 3 (b) CI (central)	Layer 4- Specialist Subsidiary
Relationship with tenants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenant committees and communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consumer/ Customer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community-based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consumer-based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community → Consumer
CI rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some core themes expected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discretionary, part of a business plan Adding value in the external environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core services- Community driven 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core strategic themes Funding driven 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core community Identity
CI delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding approval 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central strategies, consistent services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variation in local regional services, frontline delivery, face-to-face 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent offer with some regional variation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frontline delivery/ local knowledge

9.4. Sub-cultures and multiple logics

9.4.1. Organisational sub-cultures

Organisational cultural theory provides the tools to uncover and describe cultural variation or organisational sub-cultures within HAX. Many of the themes discussed above such as structure, leadership, values and organisational identity contribute towards building a picture of the organisational culture or the ‘way things were done’ at HAX (Tunstall, 1983; Drennan, 1992; Johnson, 1992; Schein, 1991; Schwartz and Davis, 1981) What is particularly

fascinating about this case study is the change in organisational paradigms or taken-for-granted assumptions (Schein, 1991) as the dominant central leadership put into motion a restructuring programme motivated by an efficiency agenda, and promoting a unified corporate identity with clear values and beliefs based on growth, financial strength and meeting operational and regulatory targets.

The power structures in an organisation can lead to the beliefs and assumptions of dominant groups being adopted while the organisation's structure highlights key foci and important relationships in the organisation (Johnson and Scholes, 2002). This can be seen in the case of HAX where a dominant executive business culture permeates a centralised structure with the emphasis on top-down leadership. This is typified in the establishment of its new CI department with its emphasis on centralised strategic planning and performance measurement systems akin to the core housing services at the organisation.

In the theoretical framework for this study (see Chapter 3), a critical device for unpicking the multiple layers of HAX, is the concept of 'multi-layered organisations' with organisational sub-cultures (Gregory, 1983; Hofstede, 1980; Martin and Mayerson; 1988). Extending Hofstede's (1980) theory of cultural variances between organisations in different countries to the difference in cultures across the management strata and geographical spread of HAX's operating companies reinforce the idea of multiple sub-cultures at HAX. Of the number of dimensions along which culture differences can be understood 'power/ distance' (Hofstede, 1991) can aptly describe some of the changes in

intra-organisational culture as related to CI strategy at HAX. Where formerly the more regional and locally driven management of CI (Layer 3a) is symptomatic of a low power distance with greater decentralisation, and less hierarchical structure, the centralised CI department as part of the restructured HAX is indicative of a high power distance, with power concentrated at the top of management hierarchy and clearer boundaries between management tiers in terms of job titles, status and salaries.

It has to be taken into account that sub-cultures themselves are not always homogenous or integrated but are subject to phases of differentiation and fragmentation (Martin and Meyerson, 1998). Specific mixes of sub-cultures do contribute to the uniqueness of an organisational culture, and the empirical findings from this case study do support the notion that sub-cultures shift and evolve as the organisation undergoes strategic changes (Gregory, 1983). At the same time considering the thematic evidence presented here (as summarised in Table 9-5), it is possible to draw conclusions about the shared values, nature and character of each of the layers of this study. These are presented in Table 9-6 below.

Looking across the layers, these descriptions attempt to capture the key aspects of organisational culture pertinent to this study namely values, power and organisational structures (Jonson and Scholes, 1992, Gregory, 1983, Schein, 1981)

Table 9-6: Organisational Sub-Cultures

Layer 1 – Board	Layer 2- Executive	Layer 3 (a) CI (regional/ divisional)	Layer 3 (b) CI (central)	Layer 4- Specialist Subsidiary	Layer 5 Snapshot
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial responsibility • Traditional paternalistic attitudes to tenants • Central and Regional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial focus • Corporate outlook • Visionary • Centralised, top-down management • Policy and procedure • Promoting cultural homogeneity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local roots and responsive-ness • Regional • Regional management of key areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central • Strategic • Commercial edge • Legitimising business edge of CI • Centralised • Functional management of key themes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local community roots and commercial viability→ • Financial stability and growth • Reduced autonomy • Regionally based with centralised priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflecting links and heritage with operating companies • Regional with local community links • People and places

Source: The Author (2011)

Trying to find the appropriate terminology to capture the essence of the common cultural characteristics emerging across the multiple layers was a challenging part of the analysis. Words like ‘corporate’ and ‘commercial’ seemed to aptly describe the identity and values, the centralised structure and hierarchical management of the amalgamated organisation with its dominant executive leadership. While ‘regional’ is more of a geographical term that description of organisational culture, in this case it also incorporates the idea of community drivers and local responsiveness, as illustrated in Table 9-7.

Table 9-7: Organisational Sub-Cultures

Layer 1 – Board	Layer 2- Executive	Layer 3 (a) CI (regional/ divisional)	Layer 3 (b) CI (central)	Layer 4- Specialist Subsidiary	Layer 5 Snapshots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial responsibility • Some paternalistic attitudes to tenants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial focus • Corporate outlook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local roots and responsiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central • Strategic • Commercial edge • Legitimising business edge of CI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local community roots → Commercial focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflecting links and heritage with operating companies

Source: The Author (2011)

9.4.2. Multiple logics

The part-inductive, part-deductive research process of this study revealed that certain institutional logics were critically linked to the organisational sub-culture at HAX, and like the evolving organisational sub-cultures, these logics were uncovered through the multi-layered empirical exploration of a changing CI strategy.

The institutional field (Scott, 2001) for the case study organisation is the social housing sector in the UK with its peculiar sets of change drivers and organisational responses (See Chapter 2). Within the social housing sector itself the largest few HAs display a distinct set of organisational qualities driven by certain economic, political and cultural change factors. To some extent these distinctive characteristics have been self-defined by the larger HA sector (L&Q

2005; Housing Futures Network, 2008), yet analysis of Cave review responses (DCLG, 2007) in Chapter 2 of this thesis, suggests that organisational size is not the only basis for differential strategic positioning, but that an organisation's culture, values and identity also determine where it is located between public and private or commercial and social poles. A previous application of institutional logics theory to the social housing context (Mullins, 2006) provides one starting point on which to build an understanding of the logics prevailing in this particular case study organisation.

In the same way that management practices and organisational structures are key components of organisational culture (Brown, 1995; Johnson and Scholes, 2002), *“organizational forms and managerial practices are manifestations of, and legitimated by, institutional logics.”* Greenwood et al (2010, p.251).

While organisational culture is about identity and values, 'institutional logics refer to the belief systems and related practices that predominate in an organisational field'. Scot (2001, p. 139) Lounsbury (2007, p. 289) reiterates the association between the concept of logics and “broader cultural beliefs and rules that structure cognition and guide decision making in a field.” The purpose of this section is to understand the strategic decision-making at HAX by looking at the dominant logics that influence the forms and practice of CI (Greenwood et al, 2010).

The idea of multiple logics or multiple conflicting belief systems (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Scott 1994) is adopted by Thornton (2002, 2004) in a publishing sector and Mullins (2006a) in a social housing context. In a later piece of work

looking back at investment firms in the early 20th century, Lounsbury (2007) considers the shift in logics from ad hoc craft based vocations with the growth fund movement, contending that the diffusion of new practice is shaped by these competing logics or “*multiple forms or modes of reality that generate variation in organizational adoption behaviour and practice*” (Lounsbury, 2007, p. 302).

Building on Thornton’s (1999; 2002; 2004) work on competing institutional logics, Mullins (2006, p.13) provides an encouraging rationale for institutional logics as an informative and appropriate framework in understanding how HAs, with a specific set of values and beliefs, respond and adapt to a set of multiple conflicting change drivers:

“Logics provide a means for organisations to simplify this complexity, incorporating both beliefs and behaviours. Logics also connect organisations to the institutional fields in which they operate and it is useful to identify the ways in which beliefs and practices are shared and reproduced by exchanges.”

While Mullins’ paper is framed at a sector level using a number of case studies to highlight the logics identified in a systematic review of the sector’s history, the approach taken in framing the findings as an interplay between competing logics and possible future directions of HAs is one that is adopted later in this chapter to frame the empirical findings of this PhD, with the researcher identifying the current position of HAX with regard to its CI strategy and possible future strategic management options as institutional logics overlaid with

organisational sub-cultures. The realised strategic changes in CI at HAX, in the form of its centralised department with core organisation-wide themes, as well the multi-layered participants' views of the rationale behind doing CI and the way it was delivered, were very relevant in building a picture of the dominant institutional logics at HAX.

As with the dilemma in the choice of terminology to capture the essence of the variant sub-cultures at HAX, a number of different options were considered that would best describe the tension in institutional logics presented by the research findings. A number of competing logics that were relevant to the research findings were considered:

- Consumer/ Community
- Business/ Social Purpose
- Efficiency/ Local Responsiveness.

Ultimately the terms that seemed to most fit the evidence presented on changes in CI at HAX as well as the terminology used by the participants themselves were the competing logics of 'customer' and 'community'. The 'community' logic was somewhat apparent in the first layer of this study, and strongly evident in Layers 3A, 4 and 5, that is the regional management of CI, a niche subsidiary association and CI projects on the ground. Associated with this logic were values about being locally responsive and community-led. This reflected a community development approach and a community empowerment philosophy found in parts of the old OPCOs. 'customer' logic was dominant at executive

level (Layer 2) and within the new centralised CI management department where the focus of CI was on the ‘customer’ or tenant rather than a broader community or neighbourhood. This logic implied a business rationale behind CI as a service, with a concern with giving CI a strategic commercial edge. Table 9-8 below describes these logics across the multiple layers of HAX.

Table 9-8: Multiple Logics

Layer 1 – Board	Layer 2- Executive	Layer 3 (a) CI (regional/divisional)	Layer 3 (b) CI (central)	Layer 4- Specialist Subsidiary	Layer 5 Community Snapshots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial and financial responsibility • Paternalistic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial focus Corporate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local roots and responsiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central vision • Commercial edge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local community roots → Commercial focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to community needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenant/ Customer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumerist • Commercial Logic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community, Localism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumerist • Centralist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Niche community to consumerist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenant as stakeholder

Source: The Author (2011)

9.5. A Culture-Logics Matrix

The grounded approach of this PhD project using scoping fieldwork to uncover not only key issues but possible theoretical connections between them, led to the decision to link sub-cultures and driving logics to explore the changing

directions of CI at HAX. This overlap between organisational culture and institutional logics is used to map the strategic changes and positioning of the case study organisation HAX in a theoretical context.

As described in the previous section, there are well-established theoretical links between organisational culture and institutional logics, particularly the intangible aspects of organisational culture and the 'symbolic elements' of institutions, which can be subject to both incremental and revolutionary change. (Hoffman, 1997; Parsons 1990; Scott, 2001) Links between culture and institutionalism are an underlying thread in intuitionist literature (Scott, 2001) as is evident in the 'cultural cognitive pillar' of institutions (Scott, 2001). Thornton (2002) draws on Scott's (1995) typology which describes the channels of institutions located in 'carriers' such as cultures (interpretive structures and patterns of meaning), social structures (social networks and role systems), and routines (habitualized behaviours). This framework reinforces the connection between institutional theory and organisational culture and is reiterated by Lounsbury's (2007, p. 289) view on logics as "*broader cultural beliefs and rules that structure cognition and guide decision making in a field.*"

Focusing specifically on the role and nature of CI, the empirical examples presented in this study suggest that aspects of the previous CI programme which could be clearly defined by a locally responsive, community culture and logic become more homogenised as structural changes are implemented across the organisation. Reinforcing the theoretical notion of multiple, sometimes competing, logics (Friedman and Alford, 1991, Scott 2001) the

evidence presented at the time of the research case study suggests that a dominant customer logic tied in with commercial and corporate, centrally driven sub-culture had largely overtaken the community logic, which was associated with a traditional locally responsive or regional culture, as the prevailing institutional logic at HAX. These links are mapped in Figure 9-2 the Logics-Culture Matrix:

Figure 9-2: The Logics-Culture Matrix – The Strategic Positioning of CI at HAX

INSTITUTIONAL LOGIC:		ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE:
CUSTOMER	COMMUNITY	
Focus of CI strategy	Ideal vision/ aspiration?	Corporate business outlook, central structure
Least developed – locally responsive customer focus	Deliberate move away from this ad hoc model- not desirable.	Locally responsive, regional structure

Source: The Author (2011)

The first quadrant identifies the focus of CI strategy by the end of the fieldwork period that is centrally managed, customer driven and with a commercial edge. While this strategic focus could change as the organisation moves forward after a period of rationalisation, during the extensive fieldwork period there seemed

to be a weak connection between a business culture and a locally responsive CI service. However, towards the end of fieldwork phase, plans were being developed at HAX for local tenant steering panels across the organisation as well as the establishment of a small grants fund which would be available for tenants and communities to bid for to fund a variety of locally themed projects. Since these ideas were still at a planning stage, they have been located on the top right box as an aspiration of the organisation which would be to engage with local communities but still having a strong business rationale with central CI management control. Another option keeping the business or commercial logic of tenants as customers would be a regional structure with an emphasis on locally responsive CI activities. However this would not tie in with the streamlined functionally based organisational structure, nor with the efficiency agenda with its core themes and a consistent CI offer which this structure was intended to deliver. The combination of logic and culture that HAX seemed to now least identify with was a community-driven service within a regional structure, which was the case in a number of projects and operating companies prior to the restructuring programme at HAX. This positioning is therefore described as the least desirable and one that the organisation's senior management sought to deliberately move away from.

9.6. Conclusion

This chapter has synthesised the core themes that emerged from exploring multiple views across 5 layers of the case study organisation HAX. While

chapters 6, 7 and 8 presented a narrative of findings under the broad categories of strategy, culture and logics, this chapter has uncovered specific themes within these broad categories that were common and recurring across the 5 layers. These common themes were assimilated in Table 9-5 to enable a cross-sectional comparison of the key issues emerging at HAX from the distinctive perspective of each of these layers. These final themes capturing key elements of organisational culture included Strategic Priorities, Organisational Structure, Identity, Accountability, Relationship with Tenants, CI Rationale and CI Delivery. A synthesis of these themes is used to identify to a dominant organisational sub-culture and driving institutional logic for each of the layers of this study, which are then framed conceptually in a Culture-Logics model to locate the strategic positioning of HAX with regard to its CI programme.

The following, and final chapter, provides an overview of the key findings presented in this chapter, considering their broader implications and how this research contributes to the debate on the hybridity of third sector social housing organisations. The Culture - Logics Matrix is further developed as a conceptual framework which can be regarded as an original empirical outcome of this study.

CHAPTER 10:

CONCLUSION

10.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the principal aims, themes and implications of the case study which has been the subject of this thesis. Essentially the chapter is structured in two halves, the sections that look back on the study and its findings, considering the unique contribution of the research and the challenges that were faced; and the sections that look forward, locating the empirical analysis from the case study findings in a broader context to highlight new questions and scope for further research. Section 10.2 summarises the research aims of the study, highlighting two underlying themes that permeated the research, namely a multi-layered approach and an iterative research cycle. The following Section 10.3 builds on arguments presented in Chapter 9, to consider the theoretical and empirical implications of this study. In Section 10.4, some the challenges that were peculiar to this study are reflected on, and a case is made for the original contribution of this study, using the challenges outlined as unique qualities of the research to be exploited. Section 10.5 considers the future outlook for both the case study HAX in the context of its industry. Finally Section 10.6 concludes with some thoughts on the scope for future research building on the findings presented by this study.

10.2. Research Aims and Underlying Themes

The principal aim of this study was to explore the changing strategic management and culture at a large housing association by exploring the development of its CI strategy³⁵, as a reflection of multi-layered views and sub-cultures within the organisation combined with competing institutional logics.

These themes were derived through a multi-layered rationale drawing on an analysis of sector change drivers and early empirical findings, while building on a theoretical framework in a context of a part-inductive, part-deductive research methodology.

This customised research cycle (Figure 10-1) reflected the cyclical, iterative nature of the process of distilling the research questions where each stage of the research cycle was revisited and informed by the previous stages.

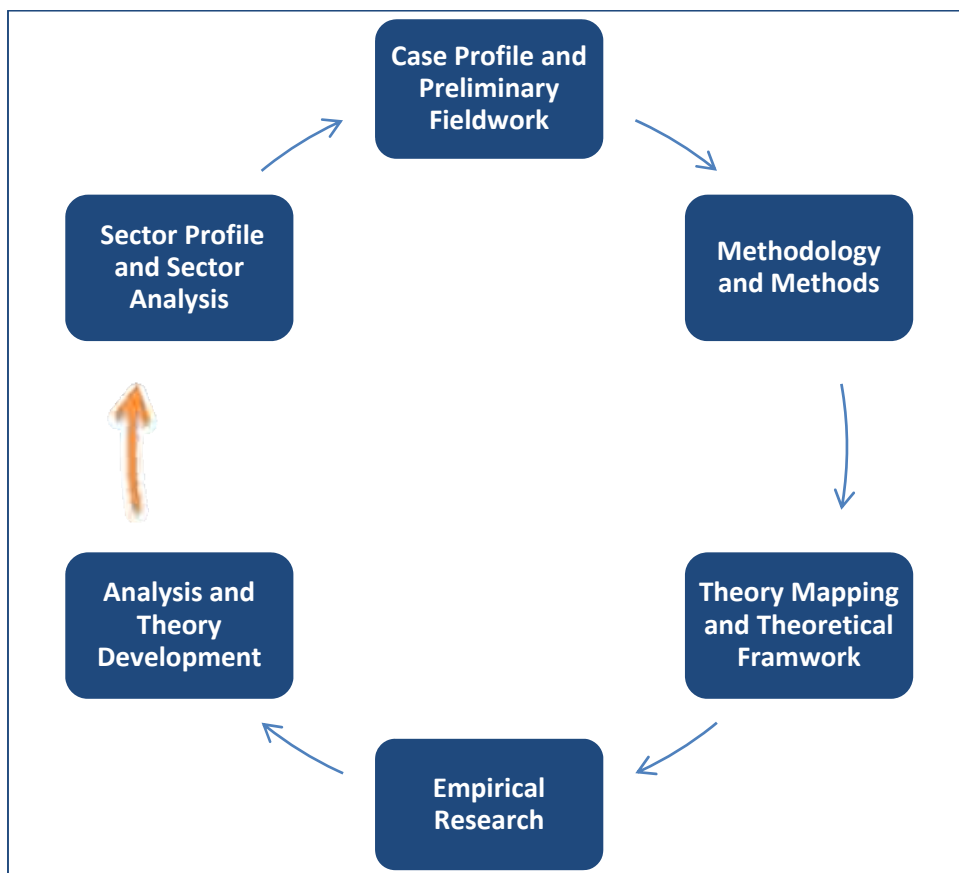
The stages themselves informed the structure of this thesis and the content of its chapters:

Chapter 2 provided a background profile and critical analysis of the English HA sector, focusing on the key themes of this study. In Chapter 3 a theoretical framework for this case study was developed which links the key concepts of strategic management, organisational culture and institutional logics. The ontological positioning reflected in this study, the methodological approaches adopted and the detailed research design were the subjects of Chapter 4. Chapters 5 to 9 constituted the original empirical contribution of this case study,

³⁵ Taking together the preliminary scoping period and primary fieldwork period. The third year of the PhD was assigned for data analysis and writing up the thesis.

starting with an organisational profile and reflections on preliminary scoping fieldwork (Chapter 5); moving onto a multi-layered exposition of research findings (Chapters 6- 8); and finally a critical analysis of these findings and consequent theoretical implications (Chapter 9).

Figure 10-1: The Research Cycle



Source: The Author (2010)

Indeed this chapter serves the function of ‘closing the loop’ or restarting the cycle by considering the implications from empirical findings of this case study in relation to new sector trends and the future outlook of the English HA sector. In this way a new sector analysis could be conducted mapping evolving change

drivers and organisational responses, which in turn could be explored in further empirical research.

Apart from this layered approach of recurring stages (depicted in Figure 10-1), and the multi-layered rationale behind the topic and main themes of the research, this study has sought to adopt a multi-layered approach in other ways. Methodologically, the research was designed as multiple layers or mini-case studies within a single case study to uncover the different views, sub-cultures and co-existent realities within the organisation. Methodology was linked to a theoretical framework by layering these organisational sub-cultures with external and institutional factors.

This chapter will also complete a layering of perspectives from the macro-level questions that informed the research themes, to an in-depth exploration of these themes within a case study, and finally here in locating the empirical findings of this case study back in the context of broader sector debates.

In Chapter 1, this layering of perspectives was described as a 'zoom' lens with wider or narrower frames. At the start of the research process this lens was framed widely.

The changing role of CI as indicative of broad sector debates to do with identity (public, private or hybrid), function (core or discretionary services additional service) and accountability (to tenants, communities and society). A microcosm of this debate was evident in the changing CI at HAX, and the research lens 'zoomed in' for the detailed qualitative study of the organisation HAX to explore

strategic directions, uncover multi-layered views, and link organisational sub-cultures and institutional logics. Having presented the findings of this in-depth study, the research lens now 'zooms out' again, relating key findings and outcomes to broader theoretical debate as well as considering new change drivers in the HA sector and implications for the future direction of HAX within this context.

10.3. Research Objectives, Findings and Implications

10.3.1. Research Aims and Objectives

An overarching theme of this research project has been the multi-layered view of a large housing association. With this in mind an attempt has been made to layer methodology with theory by linking an exploration of mini case studies and organisational sub-cultures with institutional logics. The principal rationale behind this theoretical model was to link the key concepts of strategy, culture and CI in a framework that supported the multi-layered emic study of a large organisation and acknowledged its co-existent realities as influenced by a particular set of internal and external change drivers.

Following on from the multi-layered rationale behind Strategy, Culture, Institutional Logics and Community Investment as the key themes for the case study, the general aim of this study could be expanded to generate some practical research objectives in order to explore these major themes.

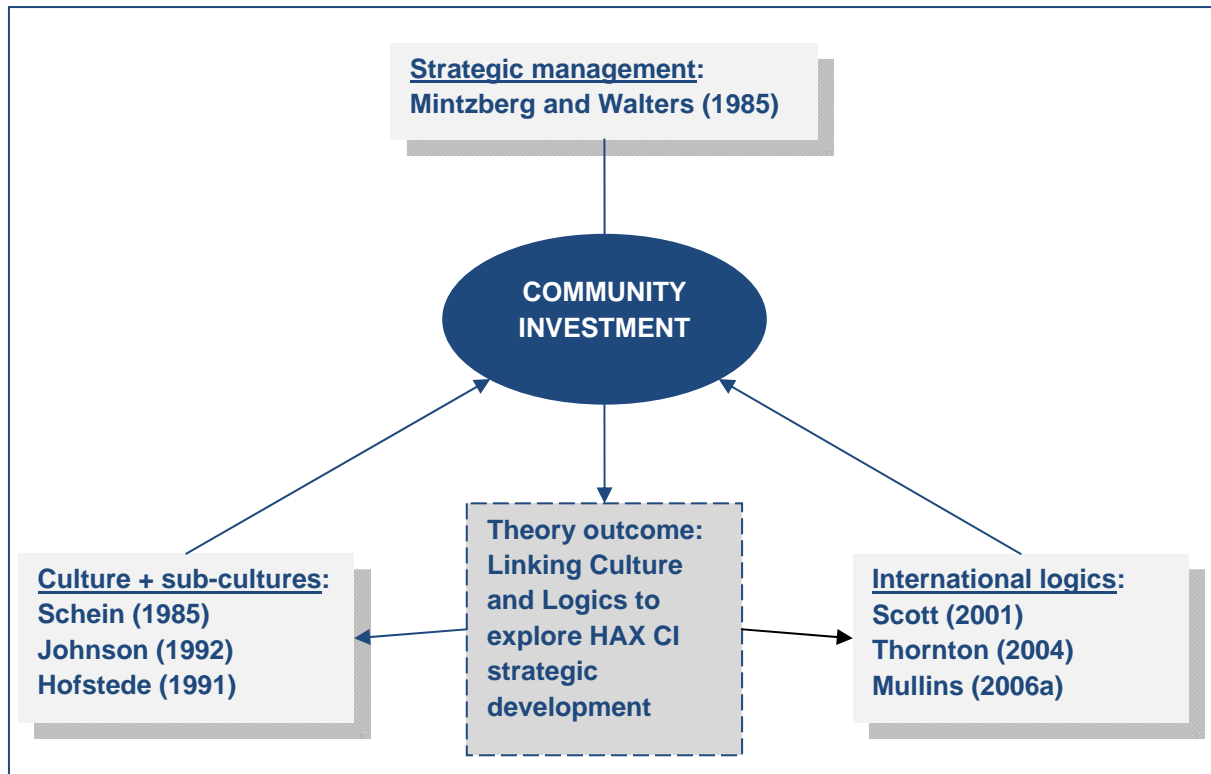
Table 10-1 links these objectives with theoretical reference points, which informed the theoretical framework for this study as depicted in Figure 10-2.

Table 10-1: Research Objectives and Theoretical Reference Points

Research Objective	Theoretical Reference Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore emergent and realised strategy and influences through the example of key strategic and operational changes in CI over the duration of the research project. 	Mintzberg and Waters (1985) for strategy as a process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify (changing) sub-cultures i.e. shared values and multiple identities/visions of the same organisation as well as the regional or centralised bias of these sub-cultures. 	Schein (1985), Johnson(1992), Hofstede (1991) for understanding and describing organisational culture and sub-cultures- values, identity etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reveal participants' perceptions on the core purpose and identity of the organisation, and changes in strategy and culture. 	<p>Schein (1985), Johnson(1992), Hofstede (1991) for understanding and describing organisational culture and sub-cultures- values, identity etc.</p> <p>Mintzberg and Waters (1985) for strategy as a process.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncover the range of views for why and how CI is done/ should be done and relate to organisational culture and perceptions of the identity of the organisation. 	<p>Schein (1985), Johnson(1992), Hofstede (1991) for understanding and describing organisational culture and sub-cultures.</p> <p>Mullins (2006a), Thornton (2004) and Scott (2001) for identifying influential institutional logics.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Link each mini-case study to a driving institutional logic 	Mullins (2006a) competing logics of efficiency and accountability as key themes to be further dissected and developed in conjunction with theory on sub-cultures.

Source: The Author (2009)

Figure 10-2: Theoretical Framework for a Multi-Layered Case Study



Source: The Author (2009)

The rationale behind this theoretical model was to link the key concepts of strategy, culture and CI in a framework that supported the multi-layered academic study of a large organisation and acknowledged its co-existent realities as influenced by a particular set of internal and external change drivers.

10.3.2. Key Findings

The dominant emergent themes from 14 months of empirical research included underlying tensions in strategic decision-making and corporate objectives between a management drive for an efficient rationalisation of the operating companies and a reluctance to change from within some parts of the

organisation. Internal communication was about creating a single identity and trying to define what the new HAX was all about.

A key theme driving strategic developments, particularly around the restructuring programme was the quest for a consistent service offer for tenants or customers. There was also a growing acknowledgement of the imbalance between a dominant financial and efficiency agenda, and shortcomings in providing the 'softer stuff' such as CI. A new centralised CI directorate was created to provide a strategic focus and consistency to previously localised, ad hoc services, based on the rationale that CI should be done in a business-like way, making communities more attractive as a part of a sound business plan. The new CI vision was about flexibility and being able to respond to changing political agenda and funding environments. HAX would take a more centralised, strategic approach as a departure from previous ad hoc strategies linked to local neighbourhoods.

Some staff, particularly within the former regional and divisional CI teams, felt a great loss of identity and the end of taken-for-granted ways of doing things. They argued that the restructure was not taking the best out of each operating company, and that their relationship with HAX did not feel like a partnership. Concern was expressed about a loss of local knowledge and a shift in rationale from empowering residents and communities, and investing in people to predominantly efficiency and financial drivers, and systems-oriented approaches. Managers regarding themselves as socially driven, were having to adapt to a new 'Corporateness' and adopt terms like 'market place' and 'customer service.'

A specialist niche community service provided by a small subsidiary housing association did not seem to have a cultural fit with HAX and its efficiency-driven restructuring and centralisation programme. Because of a growing business rationale, this subsidiary organisation was led down a more generic route with a standard housing service offer to tenants or consumers, rather than remaining a provider of a specialist outreach service targeting an ethnic minority community. Some participants in the study with a personal and cultural link to the association felt the financial stability achieved from being a subsidiary of an efficient and financially driven organisation merited the shift in identity.

The changing funding climate at the time of this project also meant that funding bodies in the UK were no longer offering grants for general community services targeted at specific neighbourhoods, but concentrating on awarding grants for specific funding streams such as employment, health and wellbeing or financial inclusion, which could benefit society more generally. This shift away from localised community services to broader strategic themes of activities was echoed by changes in CI management at HAX.

A common view expressed across the multiple layers of HAX and one reinforced by empirical evidence was that efficiency, financial priorities and a corporate culture had displaced the regional identities and priorities of its operating companies. This supports the premise that the presence of two logics within a field may reflect a process of change whereby one logic displaces the

other (Thornton, 2002; 2004) and where fields become fragmented with competing logics, new organisational forms become apparent (Scott, 2001) since tensions between institutional logics create pressures for organizational change (Thornton, 2002).

Of course one has to consider the ‘institutional complexity’ (Greenwood et al, 2010) such as different political conditions in England at the time of, and preceding the PhD case study project, where policies such as the ‘demunicipalisation’ of social housing (Mullins, 2006), the co-location of centralised regulatory and funding bodies, and schemes such as Investment Partnering which stimulated merger activity and drove the growth of mega HAs and consequently the centralisation of services to meet regulatory demands and leverage efficiencies.

Overall, the empirical evidence presented in this thesis suggests a strong link between a more dominant consumer/ customer logic and a prevailing commercial and centralist culture, and a more historic connection between a community logic and a regional, locally responsive culture. These links are illustrated and described in the Logics-Culture Matrix in the previous chapter. The research findings are located in the context of an organisation in a period of transition and rationalisation and reflect the tensions in the broader social housing sector, particularly with regard to the changing identity of HAs, balancing logics and the varied rationale behind doing CI.

Looking ahead, with more regulatory changes on the horizon, the new political context in the UK presents a different set of possible drivers where apparent

localist ideals and a 'Big Society' could be surpassed by the further entrenchment of a private sector values and business culture. In effect, a different political context may yet end up reinforcing the same dominant logics identified in this study, reinforcing the trend towards community engagement and accountability mechanisms in the form of more individual consumerist rather than community approaches.

10.4. Research Challenges and an Original Research Contribution

This study has sought to make an original academic contribution in a number of ways, from its research methodology and theoretical output, to added insight on the changes in social housing in England.

In all research contexts, but particularly in a case study motivated by a reflexive ontology, the researcher should acknowledge the limitations of said research. However, by framing these as 'limitations' it could suggest that the research had shortcomings which the researcher was aware of but did not, or was not able to address. Since every effort was made in this study to acknowledge and respond to these limitations during the research process, they are described in this section as 'challenges.'

While any piece of research will have its strengths and weaknesses, considering potential problems as challenges unique to this study, meant therefore that finding solutions to these challenges contributed to the originality

of this study. In this way challenges could be exploited as part of the academic contribution of the research, turning limitations into 'unique selling points.'

A prime example of this is the research cycle that is constant theme in this study and highlighted at the start of each chapter of this thesis. As chapter 1 explains, this cycle or recurring stages reflects the part-deductive, part-inductive methodology that was the result of addressing the practical challenges of a collaborative Case studentship project.

Without the collaborative CASE arrangement the project might have followed a more typical trajectory of reviewing theoretical literature, developing research aims, and finally a research methodology. Instead, this study has approached these various stages concurrently, with an early emphasis on outlining a research design. This had the advantage of maintaining trust, real-life logistics and expectations from research participants at HAX required some indication of the practical outline of the research methodology and terms of engagement of the research, such as research methods and identifying participants or interviewees. Therefore, before developing a theoretical framework, it was critical for the researcher to develop an outline research methodology and clarify her ontological stance and epistemological perspective. Ultimately this challenge was managed by having a two-staged approach to the empirical fieldwork phase: the scoping stage and the main structured phase of primary research, using the former to inform and guide the latter.

The need to engage with participants at HAX at an early stage in the 3 year study was not only a response to a practical challenge but also a deliberate

choice motivated by the aim of producing an empirically-rich piece of research that would best leverage the great opportunity of an unfettered access to the whole organisation over that period of time. The researcher strongly felt that the opportunity afforded by the CASE research partnership would be best exploited through extensive fieldwork conducted at the organisation, which could be used to develop a more detailed and authentic layered view of the organisation HAX.

There were many ethical dimensions in the collaborative case study that had to be managed.³⁶ These included ethical responsibilities such as protecting research participants through anonymity, and also managing expectations of what impact an academic study such as this could have, particularly in the case of more vulnerable research participants such as residents and service users of community projects.

Another ethical dimension related to the challenge of dealing with a very accommodating case organisation was that because of that close collaborative arrangement and the open researcher access to the HAX, that the question could be raised as to whether the organisation would overtly or surreptitiously attempt to 'set the agenda' or influence the aims and findings of the research. In practice though, perhaps due to the professionalism of participants the researcher was given the freedom and support to develop her own aims and did not feel that her academic independence was being compromised. It may have helped that other consultative research was being conducted at HAX at the same time.

³⁶ Chaper 4, Section 4.7

Many of these ethical considerations informed decisions around the research design. In making many of these decisions, the researcher found little or no literature as a precedent on conducting a collaborative CASE project, and managing the relationship with the case study organisation. The in-depth reflections, in Chapter 4, of the practical, methodological and ethical implications of the researcher's relationship with HAX, therefore serve as a key aspect of the academic contribution of this study. Indeed this is an area the researcher may well explore further in the dissemination of findings from this case study.

While the unique quality of a particular case study adds interest to the research findings, the uniqueness of this case study also limits the generalisability or external validity of its findings (Easterby-Smith et al, 2002). What could the findings of a case study about HAX say about any other entity besides HAX?

The strategy adopted in this study to address the challenge of a limited validity has been that of theoretical transferability (Yin, 1994), developing a theoretical framework by which to locate the research findings, which could be employed in other contexts too. One of the aims of this research was to provide a unique contribution to existing knowledge in the field of housing research. The researcher could make a theoretical contribution by building on existing social housing research applying the concept of institutional logics (Mullins, 2006) to incorporate management theory and organisational cultural theory, exploring multiple realities and organisational sub-cultures tied in with institutional logics

(Schein, 1991; Scott, 2001; Thornton, 2004). The Culture-Logics model³⁷ developed in this study could be used to map organisational changes in other HAs, or indeed other sectors.

By using multiple research methods to collect data from different data sources and selecting multiple sampling points in the case study over an extensive period of time, the researcher has also sought to triangulate the findings of this study, and achieve a stronger research validity (Yin, 1994; Bryman, 2001; Grix, 2001).³⁸

To improve the reliability of this case study, the researcher provided a detailed account of the data analysis technique used to make sense of raw data.³⁹ The researcher also had access to both findings from reports conducted by HAX, as well as the results of the other research work being conducted by her university department at HAX, which was used to corroborate the evidence and research findings of this case study.

By providing an insight into the changing cultures and logics of one of the larger HAs in England, this study contributes to an existing field of work on HAs, social enterprises and third sector organisations. It contributes too to the academic discourse on changes drivers in the HA sector and organisational responses to these changes. It reinforces the concept of third sector hybridity in the social housing context (Gruis, 2009) and builds on the notion of competing logics in the HA sector (Mullins, 2006). Perhaps the most interesting and unique aspect

³⁷ Chapter 9, Section 9.5

³⁸ See Chapter 4, Section 4.6

³⁹ Chapter 4, Section 4.5.

of this research has been the opportunity to explore empirically over period of 2 years, the ways in which the logic conflicts and tensions that underlie social enterprise and hybrid models are enacted in case study of organisational strategy and culture in practice.

Picking up on these unique aspects and looking ahead, the broader implications of these research findings for HAX, the HA sector and future scope of research are the subject of the following sections of this chapter.

10.5. HAX and the Housing Association Sector: A Final Layer

The PhD Feedback Workshop that was held at the head offices of HAX in October 2010 was an ideal opportunity for the researcher to catch up with developments at the organisation since the end of the fieldwork phase of the study 8 months earlier. It also allowed a group of 15 attendees and research participants to comment on the research findings and relate them to these ongoing developments at HAX. Apart from debating terminology and their associated meanings (for example 'Community Investment vs. Community Development' and 'Customer vs. Consumer') some common discussion points did emerge. A number of participants felt that the project was quite influenced by the 'difficult' time period over which it was conducted.

With regard to changes in the management of CI, it was felt that the research was conducted at a time when the new centralised team was still at an embryonic stage and had not fully developed its team or operational plans, and

that actually despite the centralised structure, CI still had a local focus, but with a stronger strategic intent.

In addressing the rationale behind doing CI, there was a common acknowledgement of the unresolved tensions between tenant needs and a business rationale at HAX, and whether activities should be resident- led or driven by opportunities for external funding. From a business point of view, CI had to have a stronger rationale than just being a public relations exercise and an argument needed to be made for what percentage of operational surpluses could be invested in CI activities. Some participants felt that CI was about rebalancing resources at the disposal of HAX, while others felt CI as a service was expected from HAX because of the size of its operational surpluses and its position as a large HA in the sector. The fundamental service offer of an organisation like HAX would have to be continuously re-examined.

Looking back at dominant logics on decision-making at HAX, participants concurred with the research findings that these were driven by a corporate rather than a community focused outlook, and that this corporate decision-making was strongly influenced by a drive for efficiencies. The centralised approach was explained as *'laying down the ground rules then giving people choices within those'* (Director, HAX, October 2010).

Moving on to the sector, CI managers felt that while the role of CI was not always well defined, HAs in general could be more 'bullish' or prouder of the work they do in creating sustainable communities. With more HAs adopting Key Performance Indicators, it was felt that CI in the sector was adopting a more

quantitative language. However the link between CI and Corporate Social Responsibility was still perceived as incongruous by many participants.

Looking ahead at the future for HAX in the sector, there was a sense of anticipating impending changes. There would be '*opportunities as a sector we never dreamt of*' (Manager, HAX, October, 2010). The ambiguity about the Big Society and Localism agenda meant that the future was unclear, but what was clear to participants at the Feedback Workshop was that HAs would still have to be as efficient as before.

10.6. Research Implications and Future Scope for Research

10.6.1. Questions for HAX

The findings of this study raise pertinent questions about the changing identity and organisational culture of HAX as reflected in the changing role of CI at the organisation. These questions, which could be explored further by the organisation if they so chose, include:

- **Why do CI?** The multi-layered views presented in the research findings reflect a broad spectrum of opinion within HAX ranging from 'it's the right thing to do' to 'only if it makes financial sense'. Is there, or should there be, a common organisational rationale behind providing a CI service?
- **What does the changing CI strategy at HAX reflect about the organisation's identity and values?** Where does the organisation see

itself positioned in the triangle of third sector hybridity between market, state and society?

- **Can competing logics be balanced?** In the balancing act between a corporate and commercial focus and local agenda or concerns, the research suggests the dominance of a consumerist logic at HAX. Is it then a case of 'Consumer or Customer Investment' rather than 'Community Investment?' Are the competing logics of centralist/ locally responsive and consumer/ community mutually exclusive? Private sector consumerist models do still allow for balancing centralist efficiency with regional variation. On the other hand, framing CI within a CSR framework had limited support in practice at HAX despite the concept being inherently linked to a corporate, business rationale.

10.6.2. Broader Implications for the HA sector

Before considering broader implications for future research, it worth remembering some of the underlying questions that motivated this case study, which were:

- How are HAs changing?
- Why are HAs changing in the way they are?
- What are the common change trends and how do these manifest?
- What are the key issues or forces affecting HAs?

- How do these forces interplay or contest?

This thesis has presented the key research findings from a case study which has adopted a multi-layered approach to understand the changes in the strategic direction and sub-cultures of a large HA as related to the provision of community services. The new strategic directions and shifting cultures both reinforce and are reinforced by institutional logics and competing demands faced by social housing organisations in ever-changing political and economic domains.

Some of the other implications as an outcome of these research findings include the question of how HAs can balance a standardised, consumerist approach with specific, local community needs in the delivery of CI programmes, particularly in the context of limited resources and increasing pressures to do more with less, a trend heightened by impacts of the credit crunch and recession, and looking in all likelihood to be further reinforced by public sector cuts by the Coalition Government in the UK.

There is scope for future research to explore how the role of CI in the HA sector differs in relation to the scale of HAs. Could smaller, niche HAs deliver services in a locally responsive way while large HAs deliver national CI schemes based on broad strategic themes? Certainly evidence from the sector analysis (L and Q, 2005; Mullins, 2006) and empirical work at HAX seems to suggest that large or 'mega' associations have developed a distinct set of characteristics based on their:

- Scale of operations, and economies of scale
- Financial and efficiency logics
- Business culture
- Consumerist approaches

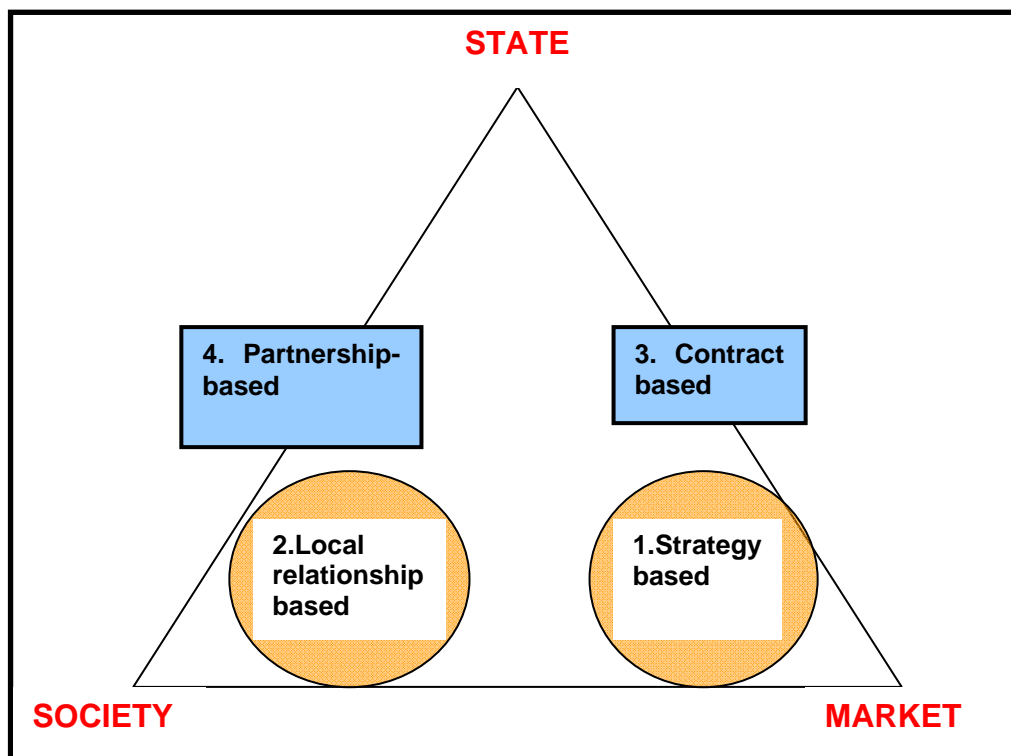
Chapter 2 of this thesis used responses to the Cave Review's call for evidence (2007) to provide an insight into the changing identity of the HA sector in England. The evidence reflected the contested views of a range of key stakeholders or interest groups about the identity of the sector and its future role in the provision of social housing as typified in the debate on the regulation of 'non-core' CI activities.

With the role of CI therefore reflecting broader sector debates on the identity, culture and independence of HAs, where CI fits in with the long-term corporate vision and strategic management of these organisations is a relevant question. There is an argument that the Conservative-led coalition government's deficit reduction plan and 'Big Society' vision could lead to a greater burden of responsibility for social landlords to provide formerly public realm services (Mullins, 2011). With government plans for a reduced regulatory framework, it could emphasise the role of CI in addressing HA accountability to wider society at large.

Returning to the idea of hybridity enacted, this study has explored the tensions and conflicts of a third sector housing organisation whose strategies and culture have indeed been influenced by state, market and society forces as depicted by Gruis (2009).

Drawing on Gruis's (2009) concept of contested influences on HA strategy, Mullins and Sacranie (2009) considered four ways in which HAs construct and prioritise their CI activities. This is illustrated in Figure 10-3 which located CI approached according to market, society, state/market or society/market drivers. Encouraged by Billis (2010)'s arguments on levels of hybridity, these four approached are mapped as zones of hybridity in Table 10-2 below (Mullins and Sacranie, 2009).

Figure 10-3: State, Market and Community Influences on Community Investment Activities



Source: Mullins and Sacranie (2009) drawing on Gruis (2009), Evers and Laville and Brandsen et al (2005)

Table 10-2: Zones of Hybridity: Influences on community investment activities

1. Strategy Based	CSR becomes the corporate planning framework and priorities for social and CI activities are set and monitored corporately
2. Local Relationship Based	Priorities are set locally by local managers in partnership with residents and local community organisations.
3. Contract Based	Priorities are set externally by contracts won from state (and local state) who are seen as having the legitimacy to make these decisions
4. Partnership Based	Priorities are negotiated externally through partnerships with other social actors (this is a strong theme for NHF and is evidenced in the NHF Audit by the leverage of partner contributions)

Source: Mullins and Sacranie, 2009, drawing on Billis (2010)

Extending this line of argument, the author's Logics-Culture Matrix (used in Chapter 9 was to locate the strategic vision and direction of CI at HAX) is further developed in Figure 10-4, to characterise CI at HAX and in the HA sector more broadly, adapting the arguments presented in the literature which are reinforced by the empirical evidence from this case study.

The first approach is a 'Corporate Customer Approach' and is where, based on the empirical evidence, the author has located HAX. This type is closely linked to a strong market approach as depicted in the Figure 10-3 hybridity triangle, and also ties in with the 'strategy' approach in Mullins and Sacranie's (2009) 'zones of hybridity'. Employing Teasdale's (2010) terminology this approach is both hierarchical and economic in its driving institutional logics.

CSR is part of this strategic vision of CI at HAX, with a consistent and efficient service offer on a large scale. With this dominant business culture, tenants are viewed as individual customers, as is the case at HAX.

At the time of this research study and in the Labour government years preceding it, a clear link is evident between a state/market approach (Mullins and Sacranie, 2008) and a 'Network Community' approach as depicted in the second quadrant of Figure 10-4. At the time housing policy, supported by the NHF's 'In Business for Neighbourhoods' campaign promoted networks and partnership working in neighbourhoods through Local Strategic Partnerships. In this Network Community approach, multiple communities are the collective beneficiaries of CI services.

Figure 10-4: Community Investment in the HA Sector: A Culture/Logics Matrix

INSTITUTIONAL LOGIC:		ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE:
CUSTOMER	COMMUNITY	
1. Corporate Customer Approach: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market driven and business ethos Tenants as individual customers are service users Corporate Social Responsibility Consistent or generic service offer 	2. Network Community Approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> State/ market collaboration Communities as collective entity are beneficiary of services Partnerships and networks with local service providers Neighbourhoods approach and community values Large , medium and small HAs working in partnership, 	Centrally driven Corporate business

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large scale with big contracts • Scale of economies • Large HAs with efficiency drivers 	<p>leveraging scale and/or grass roots presence for maximum local impact</p>	<p>Locally responsive social activity</p>
<p>3. Local Customer Approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locally - responsive customer focus • Customer Tenants with specific local needs as customers • Tailored product or service • Possibly medium sizes HAs without capacity or scale to have wider community impact, but still possible to tailor customer offer to respond to local needs. 	<p>4. Local Community/Community Specialist Approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialised or niche service offer responding to community needs • Specific community as service user/beneficiary • Responding to community needs • In current economic climate, this business model may only be feasible for small niche HAs or subsidiaries within larger HAs providing unique service as added value. 	

Source: The Author (2011)

It is more difficult at present to locate the state approach in the context of the Big Society and localism agenda which seems at face value to promote localist approaches but on further investigation may be more driven by deficit reduction (Mullins, 2011).

The third approach in Figure 10-4 is interesting as it reflects a Local Customer focus. To some extent this was being achieved by the operating companies at HAX prior to the centralisation of CI services. The approach suggests HAs maintaining a business logic, with tenants still viewed as customers, but

tailoring the CI product or service to meet their local need as private companies do with their customers. Medium sized HAs without the capacity, or indeed intent, to have a wider community impact could adopt this business model of CI.

The final type is the Community Specialist Approach where a specific community is the service user or beneficiary. This ties in with Teasdale's (2010) collective and social characteristics of social enterprises and is related to the society and the local relationship zone of hybridity as depicted in Table 10.2. A prime example of this was the outreach service at SHA, the specialist subsidiary at HAX serving the specific needs of an ethnic minority community in a certain part of an English city. This local community model is not the most economically feasible, which was the ultimate downfall of the specialist CI service at SHA. However for small, niche HAs or indeed subsidiaries within larger HA groups it could provide unique, locally responsive community services as an added value to the organisation.

10.6.3. Future Directions:

One of the aims of this study was to provide a unique contribution to existing knowledge in the field of housing research using cultural and institutional theory (Hofstede, 1983; Schein, 1991; Scott, 2001; Thornton, 2004). No doubt further research will be needed to uncover the new strategic directions and shifting cultures both driving and driven by institutional logics and competing demands

faced by social housing organisations in changing political and economic contexts.

In the first year of this study, sector debate was focused on political drivers, namely housing policy, regulation and impending legislation in the form of the Housing and Regeneration Act (July, 2008). In the second year of the research, political drivers gave way to the dramatic economic conditions of the international credit crunch and recession which had a significant impact on the strategic capabilities of HAs. After the credit crunch, it remains to be seen what will be the critical change drivers in the sector and how HAs, particularly the larger ones like HAX, will respond to them.

The impacts of the Comprehensive Spending Review terms and the Localism agenda of the new government which were beyond the scope of this research project, will no doubt provoke more debate on the changing role and character of HA sector in England which has recently been described as

“...a sector that has grown in response to government intervention and often been subject to significant and fundamental government driven change. But it is also a sector which has - with the exception of periodic local debate around stock transfer - developed largely outside of public view, and in a manner which has been notable for the absence of any substantive debate beyond the sector itself as to its broader purpose and role.” (Lupton and Leach, 2011, p. 16)

While this comment can be viewed in the context of policy rather than academic debate (the latter of which reflects a growing body of relevant work on the evolving strategies and culture of hybrid HAs on which this study has drawn), the findings and implications presented in this chapter, and indeed this thesis, suggest that there is clearly wide scope to build on existing academic research of relevance to Lupton and Leach's call. In the meanwhile, the multi-layered case study that is the subject of this thesis stands as an original piece of research, contributing to an existing body of knowledge, and in particular to the application of institutional theory to research in the field of social housing, while providing further insight into the ever-changing dynamics of an intriguing sector and the identity of HAs as hybrid organisations.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1:
INTEREST GROUPS IN SOCIAL HOUSING REGULATION
(SACRANIE, 2008)

Based on original analysis of Responses to the Call for Evidence to the Cave
Review (DCLG, 2007)

Multiple Interest Group views on social housing regulation: 2007/8

Interest Group	Existing/Future Regulatory Regime
<p>Larger HAs</p> <p>Stock >15000</p>	<p><u>Market/ Private Sector Orientation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of statutory regulation and an increase in self-regulation • Unfair market conditions with HAs in direct competition with private developers and landlords not subject to the same regulatory constraints • More flexible regulation should allow HAs greater freedom to invest reserves in surplus-making activities • Regulation should allow associations more discretion in managing their assets, including rent setting • High performing HAs should be able to increase rents to add to the supply of good quality housing. • Only grant-funded activities should be subject to regulation • Self-regulation or lighter regulation needed with inspections only for underperforming associations. • Organisations should determine their own service standards and the sector define its own standards via Codes of Practice • HAs should adopt private sector models of governance and best practice • Current over-regulation preventing boards from governing effectively • Supports separating the investment and monitoring aspects of the regulator • Tenants and vulnerable people should be at the heart of the regulatory process • - New regulation should increase accountability to consumers with the regulator as a consumer 'watchdog' role. <p><u>Public Sector Orientation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation should be aligned with the implementation of other

Multiple Interest Group views on social housing regulation: 2007/8

Interest Group	Existing/Future Regulatory Regime
	<p>aspects of the government's sustainable communities policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and regeneration organisations should provide complementary services such as local facilities, nurseries and training. • Residents' groups should be incorporated into an organisation's governance structure.
<p>Medium Sized HAs</p> <p>5000 >15000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation should be compatible with both large group structures with geographical spread, as well as with smaller locally based associations. • Focus on service outcomes and providing a 'level playing field' for all providers despite their status or size. • Smaller and medium sized HAs carry a greater burden of regulation in facing similar levels of regulations to larger HAs. • Some sceptical of increased self-regulation because of the potential cost burdens, growth of 'super associations' and loss of diversity in the sector. • Others see increased self-regulation and the introduction of contractual style regulation as a good idea.
<p>Taxpayers</p> <p>(Accountability for Public Funds)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation to prevent surpluses leaking into organisational or managerial 'slack'. Role of regulator to allocate a scarce resource fairly • 'Return on capital in social housing' (Housing Corporation)
<p>Private Funders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of de-regulation would include loss of confidence by lenders, higher level of risk and higher debt. Credit ratings would suffer as project risks increased. • Present rigid regulation serves as a 'security blanket for lenders' • Discontent at lack of recognition as an equal stakeholder to residents and the Government (private finance overtaken grant

Multiple Interest Group views on social housing regulation: 2007/8

Interest Group	Existing/Future Regulatory Regime
	<p>finance in the social housing sector but lenders are not accorded the same prominence in terms of regulation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprehension regarding the proposed changes to existing regulation • Regulation saves £200-£400 million a year in lower rates due to reducing risk. (CML) • Statutory regulation of Outcomes and Governance processes is necessary • 'Self-regulation not an option.'
Consumers/Tenants	<p><u>Shared Views</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of regulator to protect residents in terms of quality and relative choice • Customers currently can't engage effectively with their service providers. <p><u>For Tenant involvement in regulation and governance:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role played by customers could be strengthened to include a consumer panel to hold the regulator to account. (Audit Commission/AC) • Housing Corporation has not performed well in having tenants and customers at the heart of the process of inspection (National Housing Federation/NHF) • Need for a shift in the focus of regulation to tenants and customer empowerment (NHF) • Customers should be involved in shaping decisions and assessing the quality of services through acting as non-executive Board members (AC) • Framework for consumer empowerment should include residents agreeing on performance standards, resident-led inspections, compensation for poor service, and a collective

Multiple Interest Group views on social housing regulation: 2007/8

Interest Group	Existing/Future Regulatory Regime
	<p>choice of management with a right to change housing manager (Housing Corporation/HC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New regulation should empower tenants to be aware of their rights. (Ombudsman) <p><u>Against Tenant involvement in regulation and governance:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector should move away from 'tokenistic approaches' to engaging with tenants such as having tenants on the Board. • Tenants also have the right not be required to participate in the regulation or management of their properties. (Large HA) • Tenants are not knowledgeable or interested in the governance, management or delivery processes of HAs:
Tenant Interest Bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New regulation should empower tenants to be aware of their rights. (Ombudsman) • Tenants are essentially 'captive consumers' with limited choice and high barriers to switching landlords. (National Consumer Council) • Regulatory agency is needed that operates in the interest of consumers • RSL market as 'quasi-private' where regulatory approaches are 'blurred'. • Accountability of social housing providers is 'confused' and a framework for accountability to consumers is overdue. • Residents know how to make a complaint to their landlord, not against their landlord. No substantial national organisation exists representing tenants interests in England. (The Tenant Involvement Commission) • Local authority housing is unique as it provides tenants with greater statutory rights and a higher say in the management of their properties.

Multiple Interest Group views on social housing regulation: 2007/8

Interest Group	Existing/Future Regulatory Regime
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single regime for both council housing and HA tenants is unacceptable. (Defend Council Housing) • Need to keep the private and public sector distinct and separated by keeping market forces out of social housing. <p><i>‘Council tenants want to remain as council tenants with secure tenancies, low rents and democratic rights’</i> (Defend Council Housing)</p>
Policy-makers (Government Social Policy) And Regulators	<p><u>Private sector Orientation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New registration system open to all affordable housing providers to increase the number and range of social housing providers (profit distributing and non-profit distributing) (HC) • ‘Outcomes focused’ regulation, need to ‘incentivise efficiency’ and promotion of ‘best practice’ • Regulation should follow a business model: ‘culture that is attuned and empathetic to regulating private sector organisations.’ (HC) • New regulator should pursue the application of private sector disciplines with appropriate business planning arrangements for risk management, leadership of boards and executives, and awareness of shareholder interests. (AC) <p><u>Public Sector Orientation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory redefinition needed of the core purpose of social housing provider to include wider community needs and interests. (HC) • Local Authorities (LAs) should have a limited regulatory role for housing providers for issues such as neighbourhood management • Public policy over the next two years to be delivered through a diverse set of arrangements – public, private and not-for profit. (AC)

Multiple Interest Group views on social housing regulation: 2007/8

Interest Group	Existing/Future Regulatory Regime
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reject idea of self regulation- support simplified regulation
Professional Bodies/ Independents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for fundamental reform of regulation (Chartered Institute of Housing/CIH) • Role of HAs not solely the provision of housing, but also the maintenance of sustainable communities • Focus of regulation should be on the well being of residents and customers. • ‘Endless set of new regulatory burdens’ brought upon by policy passporting. • Lack of regulatory incentive for HAs to perform well. (CIH) • Commercial players should come under the same regulator framework to ensure a level playing field. • HAs should remain community and customer focused and not driven by financial returns. • Only a percentage of rental income should be used for risk
Local Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the regulation of aspects of social cohesion and inclusion. • Level playing field and the uniform implementation of regulation. • Legitimate place within regulatory framework for local authorities to hold HAs to account for place-shaping

Multiple Interest Group views on social housing regulation: 2007/8

Interest Group	Existing/Future Regulatory Regime
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistencies in current regulation and a lack of clarity for tenants impede joint working between Local Authorities and HAs who are working to different standards with different objectives. • High demand outstripping supply of social housing- regulator needs to facilitate social housing providers to make use of private rented stock. • Increased self-regulation and individualised budgets.
Trade Unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketisation has led to cuts in standards, reduced accountability and caused 'damage to the ethos of voluntary sector organisations' (AMICUS) • Social housing should be motivated by needs of tenants and not maximising profits. • Unfair market conditions where private companies win contracts by undercutting the terms and conditions of third sector associations – negatively affecting the quality of service • Introduction of market models into social housing will cause the sector to fragment so that it can no longer provide a comprehensive public service or retain links to local communities. (TUC) • New regulatory body should safeguard the fundamental purpose of social housing • Tenants, staff and trade unions need to be involved in the scrutiny and accountability of social housing.

Source: The Author based on Cave Review, Responses to the Call for Evidence (2007)

APPENDIX 2:
EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEW TOPIC GUIDE

Source: The Author, 2009

Halima Sacranie

ESRC Case PhD, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, Birmingham
University

Interview Agenda – HAX CEO -- 4 August 2009
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A. Interview Logistics

- Semi-structured with topic guide
- Flexibility to focus on areas of interest or priority
- Confidentiality, consent form and recording

B. Topic Guide

1. Critical incidents and key developments since previous meeting (Feb 09):

- Restructure - overview
 - Rationale, scope and impact
 - Decision-making on new structures and appointments
 - Structure vs. governance debate
- Market factors
 - Continuing recessionary impacts
- Sector conditions
 - Influencing agenda
 - Regulation and engagement with TSA
- Other critical incidents

2. Changing identity and vision of HAX

- Impact of restructure on organisational culture and sub-cultures
- Culture study at HAX: understanding and/or managing organisational culture/ sub-cultures.
- CEO vision for HAX
- Other key individuals and factors influencing vision and future strategic direction of the organisation
- New/ adapted mission statements and corporate objectives
- Launch of the new HAX brand Oct 09

3. Centralised Community Investment (CI)

- Rationale
- Repositioning strategy – focusing on ‘the softer stuff’
- Accountability gaps
- Balancing centralised CI themes with meeting local needs

4. CSR Agenda:

- Purpose and function:
 - Framework to connect Green agenda, CI and Employee Relations?
 - Culture/ strategy shift – alignment with large private companies?
 - Marketing rhetoric?
 - Repackaging CI?
 - Links between CI delivery on the ground and centralised HAX Corporate Social Responsibility strategy

5. Looking forward:

- Next 6 months
- Next 18 months

APPENDIX 3:
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Source: The Author, 2008

Halima Sacranie: ESRC Case PhD Study

Strategic management, culture and community investment in a large, not-for-profit English housing association.

Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, Birmingham University

Contact E-mail: hxs703@bham.ac.uk or halimasacranie@yahoo.co.uk or

Tel: 07903938495

1. Research Aim:

To explore the relationship between strategic management and organisational culture in a multi-layered perspective of a large housing association, through the empirical investigation of Community Investment and stakeholder perceptions at the case study organisation.

2. Research Objectives:

- 2.1. To consider the key elements in the changing strategic management of the case study organisation over the period of the research project.
- 2.2. To investigate the relationship between organisational culture and sub-cultures and the factors determining the emergent strategic direction of the case study organisation.
- 2.3. To focus specifically on the purpose and meaning of Community Investment at the organisation by exploring stakeholders perceptions of what aspects of community outreach constitute an essential or discretionary part of the overall housing service package?
- 2.4. To investigate empirically examples of existing Community Investment in the case study organisation and how this has been impacted on (or not) as a result of the restructuring and centralisation of the function within the organisation.

- 2.5. To build a multi-layered view of the organisation vertically and horizontally through the perceptions of stakeholders across the management hierarchy and geographical spread of its group centre and operating companies, as well as the consideration of both external and internal factors affecting key decisions.
- 2.6. To gain an understanding of the co-existent realities and multiple stakeholder views of the case study organisation in exploring the changing identity and organisational culture of the organisation

3. Research Methodology:

- 3.1. Part- Deductive and Part Inductive: A sector analysis and theoretical framework inform the research enquiry. Exploratory empirical research in the form of a case study is used to uncover key research questions.
- 3.2. Research position: Predominantly qualitative and reflexive/interpretive research process.

4. Research Methods:

- 4.1. Documentary analysis, Semi-structured Interviews, Participant Observation, Focus Groups in the format of:
- 4.2. Mini-case studies or layers: Investigating the processes of strategy-making, overview of existing and evolving CI, and stakeholder perceptions of the organisation:
 - a) Board
 - b) Senior Executive Team
 - c) CI and CSR Management
 - d) Frontline Management of Community Outreach
 - e) Snapshots of Community Projects

5. Fieldwork Outline: October 2008 to December 2009 (14 months)

Layer 1: The Board

- Subject: Board
- Methods:
 - a) Documentary analysis- Chairman's reports
 - Internal documents
 - b) 1½ hour semi-structured interviews (Every 6 months) –Non- executive/ independent members of group and operating company Boards.

Layer 2: Head Office and Executive Management

- Subject: Head office/ group executive (GET)
- Methods:
 - a) Documentary analysis - GET reports
 - Internal documents and minutes of meetings
 - Publications, press releases, marketing sources
 - Financial and performance data
 - b) 1 hour semi-structured Interviews (Every 4-5 months)
 - Group CEO
 - Special Projects Director (gatekeeper)
 - Human Resources Director (culture and HRM)
 - Marketing Director (brands, identity, culture)
 - OPCO 1CEO/ Commercial Director
 - OPCO 3 CEO / Housing Director

Layer 3: Central and Regional CI Teams

- Subject: Community Investment and CSR central and regional teams
- Methods:

- a) Interviews (every 4 months) – Director, service heads and members of central and regional CI teams.
- b) Focus group discussions
- c) Documentary analysis

Layer 4: Frontline Management Community Outreach

- Subject: SHA - BME Housing Association
- Methods:
 - a) Documentary analysis
 - b) Interviews with key individuals (every 3 months)
 - c) Service users' focus group
 - d) Participant observation

Layer 5: Community Projects

- Subject:
 - a) OPCO 2 – Gym
 - b) OPCO 3 - Community Cafe and project and Estate Community Centre
 - c) OPCO 1 – Community Centre
- Methods:
 - a) Single visit 'snapshots'
 - b) Interviews/ Focus groups with staff and/or tenants and service users.

APPENDIX 4:
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Source: The Author, 2008

Halima Sacranie: ESRC Case PhD Study

Strategic management, culture and community investment in a large, not-for-profit English housing association.

Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, Birmingham University

Contact E-mail: hxs703@bham.ac.uk or halimasacranie@yahoo.co.uk or Tel: 07903938495

Participant Consent Form: October 2008 – December 2010

Please answer the following questions by circling your responses:

1. Have you understood the aims and objectives of this study? YES NO

2. Have you been able to ask questions about this study? YES NO

3. Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from this study? YES
NO

4. Without giving a reason for your withdrawal? YES NO

5. Are you aware that all interviews/ discussions will be strictly confidential
and that your responses will be anonymised? YES NO

6. Do you agree to take part in this study? YES NO

7. Do you give your permission for your interviews to be recorded? YES NO

Your signature will certify that you have voluntarily decided to take part in this research study. It will also certify that you have had adequate opportunity to discuss the study with the researcher and that all questions have been answered to your satisfaction.

Signature of

participant:..... **Date:**.....

Participant Name

.....

Signature of

researcher:..... **Date:**.....

APPENDIX 5:
EXAMPLE OF FOCUS GROUP TOPIC GUIDE

Source: The Author, 2009

Halima Sacranie: ESRC Case PhD Study

Strategic management, culture and community investment in a large, not-for-profit English housing association.

Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, Birmingham University

Contact E-mail: hxs703@bham.ac.uk or halimasacranie@yahoo.co.uk or Tel: 07903938495

SHA Outreach Service: Service Users Focus Group - 9 June 2009Topic Guide

1. Participants background and tenancy (SHA housing or other)
2. How did you know about the outreach service?
3. Why did you access the outreach service?
4. Did the service help resolve your problem?
5. What was particularly useful about the service that made you come here instead of other agencies? How was it different from any other service?
6. If the outreach service didn't exist which other agency would you have gone to?
7. What are the benefits in a service aimed at a particular community ?
8. How easy/difficult is it for you to access mainstream housing services in [REDACTED]
9. How do feel about the outreach service at SHA coming to a close?
10. How could the outreach service have been improved or been more useful to you?
11. If you had the same problem which made you contact the outreach service, who will you contact in the future? (e.g. agency or [REDACTED] City Council Department)
12. What do you know about HAX and how it is connected to SHA?

APPENDIX 6:
PHD FEEDBACK REPORT, OCTOBER 2010-
CONTENTS, EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND FOREWORD

Source: The Author, 2010

‘Strategy, Culture and Institutional Logics: A Multi-layered View of Community Investment at a Large Housing Association’

PhD Feedback Report

October 2010



Halima Sacranie

Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham

hxs703@bham.ac.uk or halimasacranie@yahoo.co.uk

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Executive Summary:

This feedback report presents a summary of the research findings from a PhD case study project based at [REDACTED] a large English housing association, from October 2007 to October 2010. The focus of the report is to highlight the main research enquiry, methodology adopted and key themes from the empirical findings, which are presently being written up into a doctoral thesis. This thesis will be submitted in March 2011 at the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham.

As the title of this report suggests, the aim of the research study was to take a multi-layered view of HAX, capturing a wide range of perceptions and views across the organisation to explore its changing identity, by tracking its evolving community investment strategy as an insightful examination of shifting sub-cultures and driving institutional logics. The underlying theme of a multi-layered approach translates into a mini-case study framework, which provided the methodological structure for the project by sub-dividing the organisation horizontally and vertically into management strata and functional and geographical sampling points. The choice behind the focus on Community Investment (CI), as opposed to one of the other operational aspects of the organisation, was made by overlapping prevalent issues and tensions in the sector regarding the identity and independence of HAs, key developments at HAX, as evident through preliminary scoping work conducted in the first year of the PhD, and finally areas of particular interest for the researcher.

Foreword:

This report reflects on the process and findings of an independent academic project exploring pertinent issues at a complex, dynamic organisation located in an intriguing, evolving sector. Of course the challenge with conducting a case study at a dynamic association such as [REDACTED] is that less than a year after completing the fieldwork or data gathering phase of the project, so many strategic and operational developments have taken place, particularly in the areas of interest for this study. In attempting to deal with this challenge, and because it is arguably the most interesting type of question to raise, this research has been focused on asking the 'why' questions rather than the 'what' or 'how' ones. The study has been concerned with exploring the rationale behind certain strategic directions, in keeping with a qualitative methodology that is a theme of this research. The aim of this report, and indeed the overall project, has not been to criticise or pass judgement on [REDACTED] and its governors, employees and tenants. It is neither an homage to the organisation, nor does it offer advice or recommendations as a piece of action research.

The period of time over which the primary fieldwork was conducted (October 2008 to December 2009) was a particularly eventful and transformational year for [REDACTED], and a fascinating one to explore as this report will reveal. As per the style of the final thesis, the organisation and participants of the study are anonymised, with the various names of operating companies and departments replaced with slightly different titles. The [REDACTED] becomes 'Housing Association X' or 'HAX.'

Acknowledgements:

The PhD case study project that is the subject of this feedback report is part of a 3 year collaborative research arrangement between the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) at the University of Birmingham, and [REDACTED]. The researcher is grateful to all the participants in this project, for their direct

participation, their time and their assistance in providing further resources and data to help uncover what [REDACTED] is all about. In particular, thanks go [REDACTED], for the unique opportunity afforded of conducting an in-depth case study research project at one of the largest HAs in the UK, and to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], the two 'in-house' supervisors and co-ordinators, who have both been supportive and accommodating, from the very start. The researcher is also grateful for the guidance, constructive critique and general encouragement from the PhD supervisors, David Mullins and Bruce Walker, both based at CURS at the University of Birmingham. As a research student this experience has been a stimulating and rewarding one.

APPENDIX 7:
PHD FEEDBACK WORKSHOP PROGRAMME AND DISCUSSION
POINTS

Source: The Author, 2010

Strategy, Culture and Institutional Logics: A multi-layered view of Community Investment at a large housing association.'

PhD Feedback Workshop

1 October 2010

Programme and Discussion Points

PROGRAMME:

- **10.35:** Welcome and Introductions
- **10.45:** Aims and outline for the workshop
- **10.50:** Presentation based on PhD Feedback Report
- **11.15:** Any questions specific to the presentation/report
- **11.20:** Outline of discussion points:
 - Part A- Focus on research findings and implications for HAX
 - Part B- General discussion on the social housing sector, future roles, challenges and the scope for Community Investment
- **11.30:** General group discussion - Parts A and B
- **12.20:** Acknowledgements and Next Steps
- **12.30:** End of event

DISCUSSION POINTS

Part A: HAX

1.1. Why do Community Investment?

According to the research findings, because:

- 'It's the right thing to do.'
- It makes business sense.
- 'Only if it makes financial sense.'
- It supports the core aims of the organisation.

Can they all be right in principle, and does it matter?

1.2. The changing identity of HAX

Does the research shed a light on shared values and multiple identities, sub-cultures and co-existent realities?

- Is HAX closer to the state, the market or to society?
- How do we know this from HAXs values and ethos?
- How is it reflected in organisational culture?
- Is cultural homogenisation (or perhaps harmonisation) being achieved i.e. the 80/20 rule?
- How powerful has senior leadership been in imposing a common culture during the transition process?

1.3. Competing logics and balancing acts

What is the dominant logic at HAX today?

- ‘Consumer or Customer Investment’ rather than ‘Community Investment.’
- Is the organisation looking to balance efficiency/ accountability; centralist/ regional focus and consumer/ community orientation?
- Can these tensions be balanced, for example through a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) framework stressing commercial, social and environmental aims?
- Is CSR the right framework for a social housing business like HAX?

Part B: Social Housing in the UK

1.4. *The Big Picture*

How and why HAs are changing:

- Political and economic drivers, changing institutional logics and organisational cultures?
- Year 1: focus on housing policy, regulation and legislation.
- Year 2: focus on economy and recession, looking inward, rationalisation to ‘be fit for purpose’.
- Year 3 and beyond: What are anticipated to be the future key change drivers for HAX and the sector? (expenditure cuts and ‘Big Society’?)

How are the changing identity and culture of these organisations evident?

1.5. *A sub-sector of mega-associations?*

Are mega-associations developing a distinct set of characteristics based on

- Scale of operations, and economies of scale
- Financial and efficiency logics

- Business culture
- Consumerist approaches

1.6. *The role of CI in the RSL sector*

Where does CI fit in with the long-term corporate vision and strategic management of HAs? Does the role of CI:

- Differ in relation to the scale of HAs? (e.g. niche, locally responsive in smaller HAs, and broader, national themes for mega-associations)
- Still reflect broader sector debates on the identity and independence of RSLs?
- Increase as part of the coalition governments 'Big Society' vision?
- Diminish with decreased capital funding as part of the 'deficit reduction plan'?
- Become an implied form of accountability to society? (while existing regulatory bodies are threatened with extinction)

APPENDIX 8:
SHA REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONTENTS

Source: The Author and SHA Outreach Service Manager, 2009

SHA Community Outreach: Service Value and Future Directions

Executive summary

This report is has been prepared by Halima Sacranie, a doctoral student at the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of Birmingham and, and [REDACTED], the SHA Community Outreach manager from 2003 – 2009.

As the Outreach service at SHA was coming to a close, the authors felt it would be appropriate to put together the views of service users and stakeholders as a reflection on the value of the service to the South Asian community in [REDACTED]

Apart from providing an overview as to how the service has benefited this local community, the purpose of this report is to also consider whether there is still a need for community specific housing advice service at SHA, and what the future direction of this service could be. These future possibilities are considered in the context of changes occurring within HAX, the parent company, and on a larger sector scale. This report raises questions on the tensions between service demands and resource limitations, and the financial feasibility and social benefits of delivering a specialised community investment programme.

Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Background**
- 3. Service Users and Stakeholder Feedback**
- 4. Service Value and Future Directions**
- 5. References**
- 6. Appendices**

APPENDIX 9:
APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW

Source: University of Birmingham, 2009

APPENDIX 10:
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AGREEMENT

Source: University of Birmingham, 2007

This Agreement dated Tuesday 16th September 2007.

BETWEEN:

HAX

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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